

Everyone's death

and

**Cesare and Lucrezia
Borgia**

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Self-published work

Publisher name: Robert Lalonde

First edition: January 2009

In the public domain

ISBN 978-0-9783909-2-1

Canadian drama (English) - 21st
century

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Everyone's death

Persons in the play (8)

Lucian Everman
 Judith Everman, his wife
 Edward Everman, his son
 Mary Everman, his daughter
 Will Everman, his brother
 Hazard, his brother's secretary
 Tallow, a felon
 Dr Pang, his physician

Time: 17th century

Place: London, England

Act 1. Scene 1. The Everman
 house

Enter Edward and Mary

Mary. What letter is that?

Edward. From our uncle.

Mary. News from him might
 discourage pilgrims in their
 rapture.

Edward. To be unhappier is not to
 be alive.

Mary. We travel on different
 paths.

Edward. Only to rest at the same
 snug inn.

Mary. And fatten not on food but
 on our own gases.

Edward. With all the more reason
 should we dispute on the meaning
 of our brief stay.

Mary. Gladly.

Edward. Are we agreed that life's
 chief objective is to perform good
 deeds?

Mary. No, its only one.

Edward. Who achieves greater
 works than the wealthy?

Mary. Who achieves higher works
 than the well-known?

Edward. With riches, I make the
 worthy prosper.

Mary. Whenever known, the wise
 keep-at-home becomes a fertile
 hermaphrodite, giving birth to
 wisdom and impregnating others
 with similar children.

Edward. A hole in a pocket is not
 generous.

Mary. A secret virtue is no virtue.

Edward. To give stones is no
 charity.

Mary. What's music on paper?

Edward. Rarely do philosophies
 agree.

Mary. Book-knowledge is a mute
 instructing the blind.

(A man's face appears at the
 back-window

Edward. Look there!

Mary. Ha! What horrid face is that!

Edward. I have often noted that
 stranger skulk about our house.

Mary. Let him in. Do. Very wise,
 brother. We should always open
 the door to poverty and his
 nearest kin, murder.

Edward. How may we be
 persuaded from evil without
 examples of goodness?

Mary. He looks fearfully in, as I do fearfully out.

Edward. Needless frettings on either side.

Enter Tallow

Mary. What do you mean, sir, by gaping in this way?

Tallow. I know no other way of staring.

Edward. A pleasant fellow certainly! Your name?

Tallow. My mother's name's Tallow and my father's unknown.

Mary. Your profession?

Tallow. Happy with none, unless marauding be one. Howsoever that may be, many months ago, I was-what's the word?- a teacher.

Mary. And now so low?

Tallow. High-minded scholars rarely wear rich fur.

Edward. That's well known. Where did you ply your art?

Tallow. At one of our great universities, I taught the classic languages.

Edward. Dismissed?

Tallow. Irretrievably and without reason. A good deed in this world is a dangerous madness. I introduced my pupils to precepts, axioms, saws, sayings, and citations: all the necessities of art. But I was undone and quite fallen away from academic prominence by my vice-chancellor, more endowed in vices than knowledge. How easily is the most substantial

man smoked off for a small fault! How my sails unfurled in fortune's fairest winds, only to lie gasping on the sand! Once I strutted as a revered scholar; now lean vagrant boys teach me how to steal and plunder. Stamped out, crushed to a splinter, and for what? A wanton trick in the blood. All my happy prospects flung away by a hand a gentle summer breeze might dismantle! Ah, most miserable existence! How can the defendant escape when the accuser is his judge?

Mary. Falsely arraigned?

Tallow. Condemned for an in-existent crime. He was the Mercury to my lusts, my host in secret houses, and my guide in lewd taverns, where we rioted with abandon, or where he watched me do what he no longer could. Yet it was by no means an impure desire that led me to absolute disgrace, but something more nefarious.

Edward. Ha, what?

Tallow. I refer to- what's the word?- love, tenderly expressed and returned with gladness. But it turned against me, like the bad milk I first sucked. It turned me out the door. That's my eternal affliction. At his home late one night, I incited, looked for, and obtained the last favors from his daughter, but he discovered us, whereby we were left embalmed in our pleasures.

Edward. Ah, love: for pillows he gives us scorpions!

Tallow. "Tallow gives off a lurid and corrupted light," said offended decadence, "and the smoke will defile my white girl's face forever." At meetings of our faculty, I became the gowned whoremaster's example, the only subject of his mirth, and thus my colleagues, to flatter their hopes of promotion, condemned mine to dark cells of anonymity and nullification. Apprehended, marred, blown up at the very next instant! From books in an eminent room to the dust of the streets! The early riser for brothels, not libraries, mighty at opening bottles of wine, valiant against twelve-year-old virginities, stole away my meat, and that of my three children. In our destitution, we cut our toe-nails for something to chew on, and ate no bread but the mold on it. Enraged at this injustice, I seized and in a fit of madness raped his youngest daughter and set fire to his house. My cold observer of hot, lascivious deeds was seen to leap about, pipe in maddening pain, and roar for help in burning pitch and stink, finally falling in a faint. I threw water on his face to revive his sensations of torture. The man who hates is not loved by fire. After raking up his remnants, physicians pronounced his life secure, if a bandaged puppet can

be said to live, when food insults tongue, palate, and nose, and any place of rest seems like a bed of needles.

Edward. Ha, horrid crimes!

Tallow. Rape's a ticklish sin and always misunderstood.

Mary. You trifle with deep damnation. Is rape a pleasant fault? To the abhorred victim, each day's a fit of trembling, a fall into nothingness, a piece of bread that tastes like blood, and a sense of drowning with no limit of water.

Edward. By your mien and clothes, we guess abominations have singed you worse than destroying fire. Revenge is a heavy falchion that cuts off the child's hands attempting to wield it.

Tallow. I like these admonishments, like a poor man receiving a key to a treasure-chest forever lost at sea.

Edward. Crimes to be expiated in darkness and cold solitude!

Mary. With bloody teeth biting the hard unripe pear of remorse.

Tallow. The wildest excesses are always pardoned if love be the motive. I sought out my beloved, but found her, to my discontent, sitting on a heap of cinders, where she escaped from my arms more earnestly than she did the flames and soot.

Edward. Seek repentance, not the woman.

Tallow. Take heed of a new proverb: the rat remembers how its father fed, and the adder understands its enemy in the egg.

Mary. How do you apply this?

Tallow. I was a murderer in the womb.

Edward. This leads to nothing.

Tallow. You are a physician angry at his patient because his remedy fails. -But my only wish for now is to-what's the word?-eat.

Edward. (giving him money) Receive the only medicine of the world's ills.

Mary. Lavish rewards for sinning!

Tallow. I'll remember this.

Edward. Goodness at work as recommended by the worthiest! But to wish for more, friend, will guide you instantly to prison.

Tallow. For this at least, many thanks.

Exit Tallow

Edward. Sister, let us embrace malefactors, shake their hands, and sup with them. I dip my pen in ink to write clearer. Do you wish for cheerful conversation? Enjoy the company of derelicts, rejoice with ruffians, entertain criminals, feast with the depraved, celebrate with ravishers, and call them friends. He robs himself who does not lend to thieves, he pines in isolation who does not trust a liar, he's famished who does not eat with poisoners, he languishes

in ignorance who does not discourse with drunken sots, and he dies comfortless who does not kiss his murderer. How may the world improve if goodness hide at home or, in a sleep, ascend pulpits?

Mary. You speak wisely, brother. By this mode of reasoning, I should drink a leper's urine to piss perfumes.

Edward. While other men say what should be done, I do.

Enter Judith

Judith. Heigh-ho, another morning, and from one to another only mourning.

Edward. Here's a letter from our uncle.

Judith. (reading) He visits us today.

Mary. Happy occasion!

Judith. I should prepare for him medicinal herbs and special bath-water.

Edward. Gold a-plenty he possesses, but pains more abundantly.

Mary. Treasure for the eyes only!

Judith. Such treasure your father calls trash.

Mary. Wisely spoken.

Edward. I wish I owned such rubbish; the world would then be a paradise.

Judith. Am I not married? What heaven is possible for me?

Edward. Often has father rendered homage to you above all women.

Mary. And invoked with shouts of gladness the day you were first joined.

Judith. Such praises are bad translations of a text that never existed.

Edward. Often has he averred that before marriage he was no man.

Mary. Only an unhappy innocent.

Judith. Since the day of my hymen, I'm a hyphen with no word on either side, an empty parenthesis, a margin without a text.

Edward. He promises amendment.

Mary. Will seek richer employment.

Judith. In my daily comforts, I envy the grease-smocked drudge deaf to such promises.

Edward. He does his best for you.

Mary. Bestows on you all his possessions.

Judith. His best is my worst.

Edward. We have been happy.

Mary. Blessed with such parents.

Judith. The utmost to be expected of a marriage-bed is to languish in a fattening prison.

Mary. Are you dissatisfied? To comprehend in a microcosm woman's condition in nature, I captured female cats and put them in pretty colored houses. Then I introduced into my city a male cat for careful scrutiny of their modes of copulation. I was very much deceived. Any attempt

by the male to mount was instantly rejected by the female, who, against the intruder, swelled up her fur, hissed, spit, bared her teeth, growled, and boxer-like raised her forelimbs, wrestling and tumbling with him in a heap. She chased the unhappy male, joined by the entire troop, attacking him continuously and in an offensive manner and sharply biting his rump till he was lost to sight. When I retrieved my whiskered citizens and placed them inside a smaller cage, empty except for food and water, I observed what I first expected: females with curved back offering pleasure to the contented male. Thus, restraint is the prerogative of sex, and, with many barriers which impoverish our view, men keep us in subjection to their needs, which we accept to fulfill our own.

Judith. Marriage is our natural and unnnatural lot. To join together in bed is a joy, to join together outside of it, trouble.

Edward. Sister, you should have put them all at once in the larger space, so that, by equal sharing of resources, concord may more easily be achieved. Rich places foster richer brains and wit is the spring not the winter of desires.

Judith. Have our disquisitions ended?

Mary. No, in charity, these dumps must be further assailed.

Edward. Our parish-priests admire your charitable works.

Mary. To the congregation, you are formal examples of what man and woman should be.

Judith. To think of good deeds is like preparing cakes for ghosts.

Edward. Our neighbors are well pleased with you.

Mary. They aid when needed, as you in turn help them.

Judith. Friendship is a skeleton whose soul has left.

Enter Lucian and noises are heard outside

Lucian. Is that my brother's voice?

Edward. I hear loud complaints.

Mary. And severe rebukes.

Judith. As if the man never expected to die.

Enter Will, wrapped in heavy bandages and pushed forward on a cart by Hazard

Will. Are you astonished at my condition, friends? Behold no man but a wilting snowdrop, whose seed, they say, may one day be planted in an eternal garden.

Edward. That "may" is life's dark maze. If you die and live, your death will be to us both welcome and unwelcome.

Mary. If you die and live, we'll grieve at losing you but rejoice at finding you.

Judith. Brother-in-law, tell us convincingly: are you near bliss?

Lucian. This is a sorry conversation. I allow one certainty, that he'll die, that he in his vice-chancellor's pomp will die.

Will. Commiseration is a lovely voice singing a bad song. Know at last my complete misfortune. One month ago, I wished to purchase a house, which the owner refused to sell. "That house must be mine, Hazard," said I.

Hazard. His wish is now our grief.

Will. The man died the following day, whose property I purchased from his inheritors. Within a week I moved into the house, in one night it was burnt to ashes.

Edward. Ha? Have we not heard this fearful tale already?

Mary. What of cousin Emily?

Will. Raped the night before the fire and unlikely to live.

Mary. Evil has entered into this room.

Lucian. Though the law sleep a little, yet when the thief hopes to rest on his chair of prosperity, the dog beneath it snaps at his ankle and bites it to the bone.

Will. I care little whether the perpetrator escapes or hangs, for I only love myself. Gaze at what was once your uncle, children, now some shredded poppet, nearly without eyes, ears, and flesh. I'm a fine man now, am I not? Am I not well toasted?

Judith. Did you expect to die in good health?

Will. You do well to chide my impatience, sister-in-law. I know that our swaddling clothes are our shrouds. I also know that if I place a dish of honey on the ground, ants cover it. Yet look again: is there a man left in this bosom? Can this hand still be called human, or these feet?

Mary. Unfortunate beyond what we most fear!

Will. I can only howl in madness at the bad deals I have suffered at the hands of Hazard.

Judith. How is your faithful secretary to blame?

Will. An unhappy mystery will be revealed. Atop your family-gate, suspend at once together with your name the direst warning. Heed well, for, after my death, this servant's yours. That's my final wish.

Hazard. And mine.

Will. Listen as if your ears were married to my lips. Whenever I express any wish to Hazard, it has the unlucky consequence of coming true.

Edward. Ha, is it so?

Will. I speak the truth but do not understand it. Be advised: never invoke a longing word in his presence; otherwise, you'll shrivel as miserably as I do now.

Mary. Can such powers be granted to any man?

Will. He bestows gifts to the eyes, not to the hands.

Judith. Perhaps you have foolishly misused the good fortune that might have been yours.

Will. Yes, surely. On the tree of happiness, I'm the unregarded and withered apple at the end of a branch. And here I sit, stupid with diseases impossible to pronounce.

Edward. You are going where we'll weeping follow.

Will. You may follow or not; that's as indifferent to me as the dirt between my toes. For when I die, the world dies.

Lucian. Dogs have the same philosophy.

Will. I would rather be a live dog than a dead man.

Edward. What says medicine?

Will. That cup has emptied and I have crushed it. What remains for me? Endless misery, and hopeless, horrible pains. What is this body of mine? Have you examined it? I'll tell you: merely a sack leaking with pus. Once, I was free. Now, my life's become a strange death to me, no life at all but a kind of slow execution.

Lucian. You need only to place your cares entirely in the hands of our physician, the excellently wise Dr Pang.

Mary. In a week, he saves more lives than London doctors lose in a year.

Will. I find no sign of wisdom in him.

Edward. He's medicine's only man; his tracts are cited by entire faculties.

Will. Can I live on paper?

Judith. We groan at hearing our vice-chancellor reason like his poorest pupil.

Will. When I enter a room, the young sit down to listen, and the old stand up to applaud. But yet what had I to do with teaching youth when I never learned anything at all? Of what use are professors, except to renew for the next generation the prestige and vanity by which they profit in the present one?

Lucian. Deeds belie all professions, whose value declines through every generation, except as show-figures for respect and popularity. Our physician sells powders that disseminate not health but new diseases; our judge loves justice but condemns timid truths and pardons cunning lies; our mayor promises general prosperity but with secret alliances assures only his own; our vicar preaches that universal love which promotes poverty. Abandon vain hopes in the world: our only days of enlightenment are spent in study.

Will. If you propose to dream time away.

Lucian. Do you know yourself? Each philosopher awakes in a world different from the other, but the sleepy live in none.

Judith. I have searched inside myself and found nobody at home.

Lucian. The day's different and the night's the same to everyone.

Will. Philosophy explains words with words.

Lucian. To be happy is to desire to know. All sciences ravish philosophy with immortal members, by which their beloved gives birth to ideas and implants in turn on his double-sexed kind the seed of wisdom.

Judith. Trust philosophy for a voluptuous lover of paper.

Lucian. What scene in nature or in painting exceeds in beauty a third-order equation solved into the first order?

Will. A board on which both are blotted out.

Lucian. How navigation stretches the limits of our limitless world and with what industry map-makers define and explain relations between the earth's elements to our amazed eyes!

Will. The way to the tavern requires no Magellan.

Lucian. To spy into a microscope is a never-ending land richer than any.

Will. I know that this table is composed of atoms: in other words, I know nothing.

Lucian. Ancient and future worlds are revealed in minerals.

Will. When I see a rock, I see a rock.

Lucian. To discover a new moon, or swarms of stars, is the soul entering paradise.

Will. Painted glass for the painted eye.

Lucian. A man deaf to science is a buried child.

Will. Consign me then to the earth as the aborted hedgehog of learning, for Archilochus' animal knew one big thing, but I less than that.

Mary. It must not be believed, dear uncle, that you care no more for us. Otherwise, you would not offer your most trustworthy secretary, who, through no fault of his own, seems to be the nails and hammer of your unhappy prostration.

Will. Well reminded, niece. I came to warn you against Hazard's unconscious art. I would be an abominable traitor otherwise. I do not know why, but often have I said to him: "Hazard, I would like this," or else "Hazard, I wish for that": what inevitably follows? Any wish is accepted on every occasion.

Edward. You should therefore be the most fortunate man not yet dead.

Will. Instead, I have hired an evil doom against myself. Whenever any wish is granted, my condition worsens, so that a thousand times I have wished for an end to him, to my wishes, and to me.

Lucian. Blind and demented superstition!

Will. (showing his wounds) Are these superstitions? Hazard, describe in full to the bewildered our last voyage.

Hazard. At a roadside inn, your uncle requested some wine he had once enjoyed. But our host had no bottle left. Your uncle said to me: "Hazard, I must taste that wine again." That night, a strange cart arrived, whose driver had forgotten where he should deliver his merchandise. Although our host did not expect any, he bought it from him.

Will. It was the wine I loved.

Hazard. But it poisoned him.

Will. Since that day, drink is a thing I spit out.

Lucian. Shadows to scare babies with! I laugh at agony's misperceptions, brother, as I do at drinkers of Gethsemane's inspired sweat.

Exit Lucian

Will. Listen to more comedy some have wept on. Yesternight, I said to this loyal secretary: "Hazard, how I wish my limbs were stronger! Other men lift horses while I carry fleas." Within an hour, I grew in strength by pissing fire, only to lie flat on the ground like an animate carcass. First came numbness, then limpness, and then extreme fatigue,

followed by twitchings, convulsions, apathy, and eructations. The description of my diseases has secured the fame of my physicians.

Edward. Perhaps you seek what everyone should avoid.

Mary. Or have not yet discovered what should be wished for.

Will. Should I dare to wish again?

Judith. Do not, except to say what I should serve you.

Will. A dish of turnip.

Judith. To each their pleasures. Mine are yet to be discovered, or like the forgotten isles where monsters live.

Exit Judith

Edward. You'll partake of no more luscious nutriment?

Will. Turnip mashed in butter is all I can digest. I pity with utmost sorrow the poor worms that one day will taste me.

Mary. Ah, uncle, you consider your end too closely.

Will. I was happy once. This secretary attends me with the most manifest care. What follows? My greatest comfort is my greatest affliction. Is this likely?

Mary. Your life seems like the hideous dream of a demented sleeper.

Will. Hazard, I can speak no more; cart me away.

Hazard. Where?

Will. Which place on earth is not my grave?

Mary. Your warning, dear uncle, will forever be engraved on the stone of my memory.

Will. Is it a gravestone? That's least remembered.

Exit Mary

Edward. Is wishing all I need to do?

Will. If death be your wish.

Edward. All I need to do is to do it.

Will. To expect happiness is to die twice.

Edward. May wishes be my venture.

Exit Edward

Hazard. Come, sir, to your banquet.

Will. First eat, and then be eaten.

Exeunt Hazard and Will

Act 2. Scene 1. The Everman house

Enter Lucian and Mary

Lucian. Since Isaac's son smiled on leaving, I assume he was cheerfully diverted in this room. Should I rejoice at happy dreams of love?

Mary. You should, father, if one may dream without sleeping.

Lucian. He's young, well-made, witty, and agreeable: qualities sufficient for a successful suitor.

Mary. Very sufficient.

Lucian. He's also rich.

Mary. I grant you that advantage, too.

Lucian. And, to conclude, he loves only you.

Mary. Six times have your arrows split the mark.

Lucian. Add a seventh and I'll publish the banns.

Mary. Publish my death instead.

Lucian. How! What's this, mistress?

Mary. To be more explicit, I refuse to marry him.

Lucian. There's a mother-engineer behind this plot, likely to blow up your happiest prospects.

Mary. My mother leaves me with complete liberty of choice.

Lucian. Freedom is then a traitor to your hopes.

Mary. I love Jacob so well that I'll never marry him.

Lucian. Can any man construe a woman's paradox?

Mary. He's young, well-made, witty, agreeable, and haughty.

Lucian. Pride's no fault in greatness.

Mary. Then let him sleep with pride not me. Should I not freely choose?

Lucian. Loose thinking is not free

Mary. I adhere to no authority except reason's.

Lucian. Although our neighbors hate the Jew as the lamp of darkness and the itch of acquisition beyond measure, is he not the most prominent youth in the diocese, and is to reject him a sign of reason?

Mary. His sole entertainment is a woman delighted at his charms.

Lucian. Have you not admitted that he has many?

Mary. I have carefully studied his character: I must become a cook, a nurse, and a second mother, but by no means an equal companion.

Lucian. I have carefully studied women's characters, but find them dim.

Mary. The little reason I possess, I owe to you and to my mother.

Lucian. Reason is as nearly allied to youth as dancing to the lame.

Mary. I have studied his character well: his fondest wishes are a pleasant table and a comfortable bed.

Lucian. Can a woman conceive with a book?

Mary. Was my mind formed to be the footstool of a man's wit?

Lucian. No, but to defy accepted opinions.

Mary. Or to ape mincing women with a man on each pupil?

Lucian. Even less, but you know my views on education have many times been anathematized by church synods and condemned by city ordinances.

Mary. Of what use are church synods to a mind that can understand? What has one with philosophy to do with city ordinances?

Lucian. Nothing at all.

Mary. At your high-minded institution, I learned to become who I am.

Lucian. Knowledge richer than Cajamarca's gold.

Mary. And to interpret men's assurance as a grimace in a bad comedy.

Lucian. Through my looking-glass, how easily is the alderman respected by all transformed into a buffoon!

Mary. A husband's desire for nurture is the flag of his will to oppress.

Lucian. Ho! You spy into our true mirror.

Mary. Which my lover calls a visionary glass.

Lucian. Ha! Did he say so? I mislaid my spectacles when I looked at him.

Mary. He also says that you read words, not books.

Lucian. That puny Atlas bears, as he thinks, the world's knowledge when he cannot lift up a child's. He's a Sisyphus rolling his boulder downhill, a Heracles cleaning out his own dung, or a Theseus in the maze with Ariadne's thread on top of his head.

Mary. At your academy, I learned politeness and free thought, so

that the husband who favors only his advancement seems like some distracted servant sitting on his master's throne, holding his broom as a scepter.

Lucian. Or an unformed whelp abandoned in the wilderness.

Mary. Is my mind to be a distant constellation of his universal genius?

Lucian. Free souls are glorious stars that possess their own light.

Mary. A thinking being can do no less than think.

Lucian. As I am, so you are.

Mary. I can wish for no more. Thus, in thankfulness and with a trembling hand, I offer you a brief composition of mine on the education of girls.

Lucian. I do not doubt that I'll cast in the fire all previous works on this subject as improbable fiction.

(Sounds of bandages being torn from Will's flesh, who howls in pain)

Mary. Ah, what sounds are these!

Lucian. Your kind mother is removing my brother's plasters.

Mary. I have always known her to be proficient.

Lucian. He'll be handled with thoroughness, I fear.

Mary. Should I help her?

Lucian. Help him by preventing any further help.

Exit Mary and enter Edward,
carrying books

Lucian. Have you with an assiduity
beyond youth's lightheadedness
studied your lessons of the day?

Edward. I have.

Lucian. We have grazed on Longus'
fields-

Edward. Where I bleat his praise.

Lucian. Fed full on Aeschylus-

Edward. After whose course I'm
heavy with bloody meats.

Lucian. What remains?

Edward. Plutarch.

Lucian. Words of weight.

Edward. Under which I groan.

Lucian. How's this? Are famous
writings labors to you, and not
oranges for the famished mouth
in winter?

Edward. Much harder fruit.

Lucian. Who learns by wincing? I
had hoped to see you like Lucian.

Edward. Is he not too wayward for
us?

Lucian. We'll suck on every classic
teat. After an unsuccessful
examination and against the
advice of many persons, my father
named me after that irreverent
author, to be perpetually
reminded on looking at my
innocent face of his dismal and
irremediable failure.

(More cries of pain)

Edward. O, what horrid cries are
these!

Lucian. The inevitable result of
your mother's attentions.

Edward. To care for his injuries,
my uncle should have hired the
gentler hangman.

Lucian. My brother always enjoyed
liveliness in a house.

Edward. Must we not study to be
quiet?

Lucian. Quietness is the father of
wisdom.

(Whimpers are heard)

Let us hear what you have learned
from history.

Edward. From my studies, I
conclude that oppression favors
progression.

Lucian. I lack an Oedipus for your
riddle.

Edward. Whenever greatly
oppressed, we work to remove the
tyrant and generally do. Then we
sit content under weaker forms of
oppression, provided that for
profit we exploit others. We rob
the poor, let the naked freeze,
thrust away the houseless, strike
the blind in the face, and kick
aside crutches from the lame: how
can we be happy? Therefore, to
achieve wider prosperity, we
should promote a state where
exploitation is considered a form
of thievery and where every
member enjoys an equal fortune.

Lucian. Modern plenty fattens us
to enrich the diet of worms.

Edward. From oppressions arise utopias. Thus, in the first stage of progression, I have written an homage to exploitation.

Lucian. I'll hear it immediately. By your mastery of philosophy, I stand all the more assured that, in accordance with your mother's protestations, you indeed sprung from my loins.

Edward. The bending ploughman digs the earth in pain,

To yield him food but very little else:

For me, each bead of sweat is turned to coin.

The fisherman may sleep and yet catch prey,

Not I: his boat I own, his time I pay,

I angle far more surely for his prize.

The lover gazes fondly at his mistress' eyes,

And slakes his thirst in that uncertain well:

My beauty's safer, though admired by all,

Her value rising when touched by more men.

Some read book, pamphlet, text of scribbled notes,

Instructed by nice lies they wisdom name:

My sapience can be read on money-bags.

Some enter churches certain to find grace,

To plead their case and bend obediently,

All sins forgotten, drown all earthly cares,

Religion like the soul's deodorant;

There, in a cloud of light and gilded dust,

Majestic images these words convey:

"I'm the ineffable one, the strong one,

But I do not think that I exist":

The grace I hold in hand by all's adored.

Lucian. Very excellent. Sell your elegy to merchants and let them hang it on public walls.

Edward. In privies, you mean?

Lucian. There and in their parlors, in temples and in schools. Where not? We must spare no pains to instruct the public.

Enter Judith, bearing a thick roll of bloody plasters

Judith. Never have I seen, read about, or heard of such a bloodied body.

Lucian. He's fortunate only in his nurse.

Judith. Wounds that openly cry out in blood.

Edward. To hear them spoken of freezes mine.

Judith. He's thankful for my care, I'm sure.

Edward. We heard how loudly he approved of it.

Judith. He's a man and therefore made to suffer.

Lucian. A man's also made for pleasure, if you leave him alone. I once wrote a panegyric on this question.

Edward. May we hear?

Lucian. A modest effort in the March-days and cold sun of youth entitled: "To man's most precious part". Here it is:

My alternate self, how should I name you,
Lust's tower, or my monument of flesh?

Surrounded by a turf of curly hairs,

And on each side made strong with rounded rocks,

Your point of bliss seems like some precious store

In a dark forest. You are not, fifth limb,

Like other instruments our mind commands,

Only to useful mandates dedicated.

True, we are very thankful that we own

A member that comes out so easily

For the prevention of accumulating wastes.

It is a bounty rare in any town

To see so fine a chimney on a house.

But your superior worth exceeds itself

In tasks of love. Whenever begged for help

In desperate virginity's defeat,

Or convoked by a troop of wives

Of unknown sexes, up your head is rais'd,

As when the hardy soldier, firm and straight,

Who knows he is undaunted and well trained,

Advances cheerfully through fields of blood.

Or sometimes, in the shadow of a grove,

Like a demure, shy maiden you appear,

Coy glances covered with a rosy hat,

To please and to be pleased in secret trysts.

I do not favor members overpleased

And boastful of their feats and numerous

Assaults, mere trumpets, vain and frivolous.

You choose, discriminate, and recognize.

You never settle, like unknowing birds,

On any common lake with poisons mixed.

Thus, it is you that must be ever sung,

You that must be admired in portraiture,

Applauded on the stage, you, grandiose,

Incredible, you, nature's pillar, you,

First mover of the primal eggs that swarm

And cry out with a mad desire to be

Quite inundated by your manly
milk,
So that a million may be
multiplied

Into a million millions by your
care.

Great priest of fornications,
solemn mask

And only leader of our dances,
you

Are your own celebration, your
own hymn,

And in this world we understand
but you.

Judith. Prick him as an honest
man, and sensible. Women should
also cheerfully exhibit to public
view on every occasion their
pubic beauties, more shameful in
being hidden than exposed. How
has it served women of any period
to make a mystery of their
bodies? The profit only accrues to
perveyors of sex, for peeping's a
commerce that thrives on
mystery. Name another

enterprise, beside the brothel and
its tributaries, whose merchants
hope to sell their wares by defiling
them. If we daily reveal ourselves
to the last hair, exploitation will
all the more quickly wither and be
blotted away for lack of interest.

Lucian. She's the open prophetess,
and I her tongue.

Judith. I hope it may be so.

Exit Judith

Edward. Your hymn would raise
dying flesh.

Lucian. It has been modestly
praised above Homer's.

Exit Lucian and enter Hazard

Edward. Did my uncle speak
truthfully? Are wishes granted to
whomever discloses them to you?

Hazard. It seems so, but how or
why I cannot tell.

Edward. My uncle has foolishly
pulled on the horse that drew the
cart of his prosperity, which to his
grievous harm has fallen over
him.

Hazard. To my grief, I
acknowledge it.

Edward. Your ear is like an open
grave to him.

Hazard. His hopes await his end
like a family of gravediggers.

Edward. I'll risk the attempt or
die.

Hazard. Ha, no! Is ambition ever
wise?

Edward. The contented who read
of other people's labors are as
dead as the leaves of their books.

Hazard. My lips tremble at such
boldness. What is your wish?

Edward. What else has value?
Money. Fools with money are
men, but men without money,
fools. With ten bags of gold in my
hand, poverty in the world will be
forbidden or impossible.

Enter Will

Ah, uncle, can you stand today?

Will. I stand only to sink lowest.

Edward. Are you well?

Will. Well enough to walk toward my grave.

Hazard. We are pleased at this.

Will. That I'm well?

Hazard. That was my meaning.

Exit Hazard

Will. I may be dying, nephew. I would like to think so.

Edward. I'm sorry to hear it.

Will. Now begins my final scene, played for myself alone without a stage, as in everyone's death.

Edward. Your entire life has been a strange kindness toward me.

Will. Here's what I have come to say. I would like to bequeath to you a sum not mentioned in my will. Know that I have kept hidden inside this house no less than a treasure, that can be retrieved from behind that wall. Tap on it.-no over there.

Edward. Ha, thicker on this side! Why was it never noticed?

Will. The sun moves until the true observer says "no". Behind that wall where all sounds die, discover a vault known only to me. What lies there is the sum of your Peru: ten large bags of gold.

Edward. Ha!

Will. Why are you startled? Does wealth frighten you?

Edward. My heart beats against my ears.

Will. To enter through the concealed door, pull up that lever.

Edward. Yes, so.

Will. Do it when you are alone.

Edward. Now will the world greatly rejoice in me.

Will. That's the way: think of others, and, in the end, as a reward for such efforts, a stone will sing your praises.

Edward. My fondest wish is also humankind's.

Will. I may die soon. I think I ought to. Besides, I have nothing else to do today.

Edward. Ha! Ha! Ha!

Will. To the healthy, death's a cloud of dark horror, but to the sick, a witty way to go.

Edward. The image of your life will hereafter be my shrine.

Will. Stay here until I finish my meal. I'll first eat the turnip and then become one, only do not bother to pull me up again.- No, consider me instead as a potato, for turnips are only half-buried.

Exit Will and enter Mary

Edward. Now may the world through opulence be transformed into its only possible heaven.

Mary. How?

Edward. Lucre couples with itself. I'll first oppress and then the world must thank me as its first savior.

Mary. You have acquired money?

Edward. Vast sums.

Mary. Unthought of happiness!

Edward. A plain secret, likely to be my greatest fortune and the world's. This very night, you'll conceive with me new wonders for the present age. The impending miracle will make us for certain. By the day that passed, the world will be created anew, in an improved form.

Mary. You'll reveal all?

Edward. To the last word.

Exit Mary

(Edward enters the dark vault with a candle and closes the door. He looks for the money, finds it, and expresses great joy. Then he discovers that he cannot get out of the vault. He expresses horror, yells, and pounds against the wall. No sound is heard. In great despair, he sighs heavily until the light dies out.

Enter Judith and Lucian

Judith. Where is Edward?

Lucian. Ask me what I know.

Judith. He meant to stay in the house all day.

Enter Hazard

Judith. Have you seen Edward?

Hazard. I have, in this room a few minutes ago, but he appears to have gone away to a better place.

Judith. Ho, Mary, have you seen Edward?

Enter Mary

Mary. I spoke to him just now.

Enter Will

Judith. Where is Edward?

Will. I know where he may be. - Did I reveal to him how to get out? Ha! My brain's rotting, though not yet in its grave.- Ah, I think perhaps- no, no, certainly- ah, listen, he- gone. I'm throttled.

Mary. Ah, uncle, do not leave us now.

Will. My cue for dying. A final word- I die in great despair because of Edward's mishap, but what of that? Some go now, some later.

Judith. What of Edward? Of Ned you must speak. Ha, Will, I beg you to tell us now.

Will. My soul is a dark tempest blowing I know not where. (dies)

Judith. What did you wish to say about Ned? Lightheaded, frivolous man, are you gone? Fear, and when you are wearied with it, fear again.

Lucian. My brother's dead; my own end's near.

Hazard. O, heavens, dead at last! It's all he wished for.

Mary. Ah, I have an unquiet premonition that my uncle's silence has forever buried Edward's secret, if not Edward.

Lucian. A secret?

Mary. That promised us happiness.

Judith. I begin to fear greatly. What did Will mean by dying now? In his death as in his life, confusion!

Hazard. I must look for a new occupation.

Lucian. Do we search for something found? You are with us.

Judith. Unlucky man, unlucky woman!

Mary. Have you considered our danger, father?

Lucian. A man alone and without means: what greater dangers than those can there be?

Hazard. My tears are tongues that silently thank you.

Judith. Where is Edward? What did your brother mean? Get out from where?

Lucian. Let us place him on his final bed.

Exeunt Lucian and Hazard, carrying away Will's body

Judith. Where is Edward? I have become my echo.

Mary. Here but now and then gone.

Judith. Gone.

Exeunt Mary and Judith

Act 2. Scene 2. The Everman house

Enter Lucian and Hazard, in mourning clothes

Lucian. Everywhere about us nothing but darkness and death.

Hazard. You have two reasons to mourn: your brother, whose death is all too plain, and your son, whose death is too probable.

Lucian. Twin sorrows that kiss each other for a monstrous birth.

Exit Hazard and enter Judith

Judith. When I moan to the winds at night, they pity me by moaning back.

Lucian. My sad voice is mixed with the same breezes.

Judith. Where is Edward?

Lucian. (striking his chest) Here.

Judith. Where not? He's with us still and yet nowhere. I faint with desire of him. Where is Edward?

Lucian. None can say.

Judith. Where is Ned?

Lucian. None can say.

Judith. I have become my echo's echo.

Lucian. None can utter it.

Judith. I'm a ghost that has lost its way.

Exeunt Lucian and Judith

Act 3. Scene 1. Near the Everman
house

Enter Hazard and Tallow

Hazard. Who are you, dark man of
the night and day?

Tallow. The pupil answers his own
question.

Hazard. Many times have I seen
you peep at windows, spy beside
tree-trunks, and creep into
bushes. Are you an outcast, a
vagabond, a fugitive? Are you here
to fatten your cheeks by robbing
or to starve them with envy?

Tallow. As any poor person, I look
at what I lack.

Hazard. I know officers of the law
that, dog-like, will tear off your
legs for it.

Tallow. Know, watchful servant,
that I have been favored by your
young master.

Hazard. How?

Tallow. (showing him money) With
the only proof.

Hazard. An instance of his
excessive goodness, not of your
worth.

Tallow. Worthy of charity at least.

Hazard. Coins you have sullied.

Tallow. Alas, your young mistress
gave me bad words not good
money, and, since that day, has
discovered her uncle's illwisher.

Hazard. No friend of hers?

Tallow. No friend of anyone's.

Hazard. Can a beast speak like a
man?

Tallow. Beasts are not vicious and
execrable.

Hazard. You seem like one
unfinished.

Tallow. One cannot tell a bear by
its fur.

Hazard. Ha?

Tallow. Never kill a monk before
selling his cowl.

Hazard. Here are scrabbled bits of
wisdom!

Tallow. Do you wish to know me
better? I plot rapes, murders, and
other pranks. Why not?

Hazard. Had I accepted instead of
a secretary's position the
executioner's, how cheerfully I
would relish this conversation!

Tallow. Thanks for your kind
wishes.

Hazard. Away, unclean presence!

Tallow. I leave you, for here's one
I would dearly like to touch in
another position.

Exit Tallow into an inner chamber
and enter Mary

Mary. Found at last! This day,
Hazard, you must be for me what
no man has ever before been to
any woman before: a savior.

Hazard. I belong to you and to
your family.

Mary. You are merry if you hate
us. You profess to be our loving
servant, and yet, whenever we
express a wish, we are badly
served.

Hazard. That's the penalty I live under.

Mary. Did my uncle speak truthfully of you?

Hazard. After many errors, he learned at last the wisdom of never wishing more.

Mary. Did my brother dismiss our uncle's dire warnings and propose, despite his luckless state, any wish in your hearing?

Hazard. He did, and it was his last.

Mary. And yet I'm sorely tempted.

Hazard. How!

Mary. Is it not likely that both hoped for wrong goals, or at least what was wrong for them? I, for my part, wish for what will benefit me and all humanity.

Hazard. If only I could be deaf and blind in a minute!

Mary. I'll tell you plainly and with few words what I wish for: undying fame. This fame I can easily achieve by my writings, not least of which a piece of darkness Melpomene has lovingly embraced. Here it is.

Hazard. Very well.

Mary. Have I said enough? Ha?

Hazard. Too much, perhaps.

Mary. Do you hear? Praise and honor I crave for and must obtain.

Hazard. This may do some good.

Enter Judith

Judith. Where is Edward?

Mary. You have asked us that question before.

Judith. And will repeat it at least a thousand times more.

Mary. Groans are my answer.

Judith. You steal away my function. My just complaints have become a Greek fable in the neighborhood. It would be best for me, after the ancient manner, to be transformed into a cow and moan to the unhearing moon.

Mary. Very reasonable.

Judith. Where is my son?

Mary. If I knew the solution to our mystery, I would run to you with it, though reduced to stumps and clogged in mire.

Judith. Where is Edward? In my frenzy and despair, I grow tedious to myself.

Mary. You lack rest.

Judith. What can quiet down a grieving mother's bed?

Mary. A living daughter's sympathy.

Judith. I have and do not have; I live and do not live.

Mary. A text may divert you.

Judith. What is it? News of Ned's death? Or of mine?

Mary. A play.

Judith. Is there a lamenting mother in it?

Mary. No, a cruel one.

Judith. I'll read that.

Mary. Your best remedy and mine.

Judith. In the theater of my life, I was given no cue to enter; my fellow actors play on without me while I watch from the side.

Mary. Take special heed of the final scene, where a mother, angry at her daughter, wishes her harm, nothing but harm. Behold the mother mocking her daughter's pain.

Judith. I have been too remiss.

Mary. In this scene, at this very moment, the daughter will be forced twice, first with a dagger of flesh and then with a dagger of steel.

Judith. Where is the mother?

Mary. Smiling nearby.

Judith. Horrid mother, female tyrant of a pagan Hrotsvitha.

Mary. And worse daughter, for having reprov'd and offended such a mother. The daughter is a giantess against other people's faults and a dwarf against her own.

Judith. Should we begin?

Mary. While you begin, I must end, for in that cabin I'll die.

Judith. Do.

Hazard. No part for me?

Judith. Only a hissing spectator.

Hazard. Or rather the prologue, with eyes to weep what they look on.

Judith. Remind the people that we play.

Hazard. Come, indulgent public, with unswayed attention direct on us your eyes, no longer languid or carefree, but, for the purpose of edification, unwilling witnesses to a scene of hideous massacre that will thrill the blood.

Judith. Such subjects best please the unschooled and the sapient.

Exit Mary within

Hazard. Abandon trivial diets of ludicrous entertainment that, in sordid ignorance, have till this moment spoiled your education and almost famished it with feeding. Gaze instead in wonder at solemn tragedy's table, where, from behind our wooden partition and before your amazed eyes, you'll soon be served in imagination with a dish Thyestes would have gagged at, preferring by far his own.

Judith. I'll be a good tragedian in the end. It was once a foolish whim of mine.

Hazard. Madam, on this day and till posterity whimper and cry "enough", your pains will forever honor tragedy.

Mary. Someone behind me-Ha! Ha! Help, help!

Judith. (reading It is useless to cry out. You are doomed, lost forever, girl.

Mary. O! O! My blood-agony starts now.

Judith. (reading No doubt of it.

Mary. Ah, no! No! That place's not for you.

Judith. (reading You deserve no better. Do it, executionner; prick her well.

Mary. O, pain! Horrid pain!

Judith. (reading That's my heartiest wish for you.

Mary. This cuts me to the center.

Judith. (reading Bury it in her.

Mary. Ah, mother, will you help me at last?

Judith. (reading Not likely.

Mary. There's no bandage for this type of wound.

Judith. (reading Be comforted: better medicine follows, though sharper.

Mary. O, misery! He's killing me now.

Judith. (reading Let faithless blood overflow our banks, let it choke the fish and sicken seagulls till they stink. Murder is now my only daughter.

Mary. And yet this blade is kinder than the previous one.

Judith. (reading And the best you deserve.

Mary. Is this Thames my blood?

Judith. That reply's not in my play-book.

Hazard. I greatly fear something's amiss.

Mary. O, O! I'm dying.

Judith. She dies too soon.

Hazard. Or we perhaps too late.

Judith. Mary?- She has lost her place in the text.

Hazard. No more than that, I beseech my starry enemies. In throes of dread, impossibilities seem probable. Wading on the shore of awful premonition, we often break our toe on empty shells of thought.

(As Tallow escapes on one side, Judith and Hazard enter on the other. They cry out in horror and drag out Mary's body covered with blood.

Judith. Raped and murdered, most certainly!

Hazard. My kindness always results in harm and sorrow.

Judith. A woman cannot lose so much blood and hope to live.

Hazard. I fear that's true

Judith. Look: when I place my mirror on her face, the glass is clear.

Hazard. Brightness never looked so filthy.

Judith. You saw my daughter, Hazard, just now; you heard her speak, just now, and now dead to sight and hearing, only alive in thought, in thought, in thought.

Hazard. To avert death is like kicking stones in a desert.

Judith. Ah, ah! I was happy before this.

Hazard. Who has a child and can say: "I rest secure"?

Judith. A mother I am no more.

Hazard. As sad a thought as I have ever heard.

Judith. This day has dug a thousand wrinkles on my face. When next I smile, unconscious guilt will fall on my lips and make them look like deadly sorrow.

Hazard. What fool taught us that happiness is possible? There's

little use in breathing, except to sigh and wish we did not.

Judith. You speak wisely: should I tear out my hair?

Hazard. If you do, I'll sit negligently by and count the strands. Is there a more profitable occupation in a world where such deeds are possible?

Judith. Should I rend my clothes instead, or, better still, with long, sharp nails perpetually engrave, like a living monument of flesh, mournful sadness to my face in long furrows of blood?

Hazard. As wise a piece of business as any that can be imagined at this moment.

Judith. O, O, O! I am as if I were not.

Hazard. Throw me in the dust of a whirlwind: let me choke in it or lie scattered anywhere but here.

Judith. What hateful man would wish to kill her and not me? The omitted act was crueller.

Hazard. I cannot know.

Judith. Have you seen no stranger lurking?

Hazard. No new man, and yet-

Exit Hazard within, who then cries out in grief

Judith. Have you discovered something to kill a murderer?

Re-enter Hazard

Hazard. These coins may purchase another grave; the dirt and blood on them may bury the murderer.

Judith. While we prattle, my daughter's blood is drying on her flesh, unavenged.

Hazard. I suspect someone.

Judith. I'll find my husband, to kill him.

Hazard. I'll kill the culprit, though I die by it.

Judith. Take her inside.

Hazard. The lightest burden on our arms, the heaviest on our minds!

Judith. O, she was the sweetest girl who ever wore a smock!

Hazard. She's gone. It must be so. Live accursed and die: thus I interpret these events.

Exeunt, weeping, Judith and Hazard, carrying off Mary's body

Act 3. Scene 2. A field near the Everman house

Enter Lucian and Tallow

Lucian. You, fellow.

Tallow. Ha, who calls me?

Lucian. I do.-Will you come?-When?- On my death-bed?

Tallow. What's your wish?

Lucian. Often have I seen your uncertain shape, more shadowy than shadows, move with stealth about my house at night and in the smoke of evil days.

Tallow. To lurk is my profession. I'm extremely busy at being idle.

Lucian. You may know what others cannot guess at. Do you possess dark secrets? Can you tell where my son is?

Tallow. Look up to heaven where it shines.

Lucian. His absence has made me monstrously sad.

Tallow. You have lost a son?

Lucian. I have.

Tallow. Why are you sorrowful? You now have one fewer reason to worry.

Lucian. Ha?

Tallow. The grave swallows all griefs. I have through carelessness lost in a single day three children.- Are you surprised? Last week, I slept on this ground, and, when I awoke, someone had taken them by the hand and mamlocked them in yonder bushes.

Enter Judith

Judith. I have news for you, father that is no more, most terrible and unheard of, news to make the senseless tremble. This day of all days will by your hand be marked with the blackest stone that any unfortunate was ever witness to. Deeper darkness was never the lot of a blind man pulled down to a thousand fathoms at night into the pit of a dungeon.

Lucian. This is as fearful a beginning to an announcement as I have ever heard. Have we found a son?

Judith. No, we have lost a daughter.

Lucian. Ha?

Judith. Raped, stabbed, what not?

Lucian. Ha, rape and murder? Who will make an assassin of me? The earth will lie still until my fingers find and dig into the heart that planned this misdeed, and unroot it.

Tallow. That's easily done.

Lucian. O, O, O! Tears burn my cheeks.

Judith. Tears will not drown a murderer.

Lucian. I was surprised in sudden darkness, but have found myself again. Should murder answer murder? Do we not live in a policed state? Are not killers caught and condemned here as elsewhere?

Tallow. True, who can kill and prosper?

Lucian. He cannot hide from our sight.

Tallow. You are again in the right way. It is impossible that he should be unknown to you.

Lucian. I have already found him.

Tallow. Ha? Where?

Lucian. In my mind.

Tallow. In your mind and his, he trembles.

Lucian. O, O, in my mind, he burns, until worse happens.

Exit Lucian

Judith. I'll mingle my tears with his.

Tallow. The best stream for flowing to some rest.

Judith. You'll discover for us the murderer?

Tallow. As surely as I am I.

Enter Hazard

Hazard. Can this be? Did I dream before, or do I dream now?

Judith. Make much of this man, Hazard; our daughter's killer is caught. You have said so, and he has said so, and I believe both of you.

Exit Judith

Hazard. What must an indifferently good man do when confronted with worse? Rave, or strike his thighs in despair? I'll try both.

Tallow. If you profess wisdom, sir, I'll readily become your student.

Hazard. Is this a man? No, a cesspool of black lust and murder.

Tallow. You have misremembered me, certainly.

Hazard. A new Pizarro has plundered and killed. To you belongs these stained coins, found in death's cabin, coins that accuse

you. Never was charity so ill bestowed.

Tallow. I have a twin-brother you may have known.

Hazard. O, killer most foul! No doubt you entered into the world half-aborted, with a body but without a soul.

Tallow. I have improved since that time.

Hazard. To kill and then to jest!

Tallow. You wrong me, fellow.

Hazard. I'll stuff my mouth with the earth of dead men's curses. With vituperations men in all ages have trembled on hearing, I'll weary the world for many hateful weeks. Any imprecation against this iniquity seems tame and timid. You have made abomination perfect, for it can be equalled but never outdone.

Tallow. I'll sink under no reprimand.

Hazard. Had I four hands on that throat!

Tallow. A monster would you be.

Hazard. I do not know why I do not at least maim your every limb, or, better still, tear them out and scatter them, so that, in my autumn desolation, like leaves they would spread.

Tallow. That action would instantly lead you to prison, and witnesses found to impeach you.

Hazard. I should be for ten years a-killing you.

Tallow. Poppies ease any pain.

Hazard. I bear a tongue to whip uncovered crimes. In a vision, I seem to behold your calamities. After you are taken to prison-who doubts that must be your end?-, arraigned, tried by an inquest, and convicted, the well-tried executioner will swoon on reading your sentence. Firstly, he'll prepare you for never-heard-of scourging. I'll hold you while he flays, and voluptuously lick the sprinkled blood from my fingers. After such honest work, we'll rejoice at seeing you sit on your belly and rest on your knees. His three brawniest assistants in the full vigor of youth will then tug at you, and with a brand to burn, a lance to pierce, and an axe to hew, they'll inflict on you what few men ever wish to see. After these trifles, I'll loosen your bonds, to watch more closely your body slide down from the post. With a rough rag dipped in salty brine, I'll wipe away the blood from your skin, not with a slack but with a diligent hand, in the same manner as when a very greasy stain on my sleeve is removed, so far and no further will I be charitable. Next, as a place of repose for your wounds and tumefactions, I'll lead you to a bed that sweats blood. There, new ways will be invented to stretch and macerate the flesh: with wheels and pricks they'll do it. The breaking of your bones will

lull me to sleep, while you curse nature for making so many of them. I tell you, fellow, it would be better for you to take to your bed at once and discover a method to die quietly. Otherwise, expect to ascend the scaffold with your shoes soaked in blood, and, before the gawking people, to be stabbed three or four times, enough to rip out the guts. In your hands, you'll behold amazed your smoking inwards, with your fainting body dragged for hanging, that, for further grievance, will be purposely botched. Your neck will not be broken immediately- forget as a child's fantasy any hope of such a favorable ending- but rather strangled in a choking fit. At that moment, I'll rejoice and gaze my fill at your poor, almost dead body suspended, kicking at un pitying air, till a guard receive an order to jump on your legs. Be certain that, to prevent such doubtful lovingkindness, I'll admonish with a shout the officer in charge with these words: "No, no, hold off; send instead up to the prisoner a lean newborn girl, I beg you, because a man is too heavy."

Tallow. Is this likely?

Hazard. O, vengeance, I call on you now! Arise from doleful, turbulent regions of the mind and blow this round-faced viper to the law's deepest pit, where hidden

rat-mouths may seize and gnaw at him!

Tallow. A reasonable request.

Hazard. Ah, must my hands always beat wearily against my sides?

Tallow. These expostulations have grown tedious.

Hazard. Ah, my bowels are turned into the bitter waters of hatred; I look in the air and my complaints sigh on breezes that die away.

Tallow. Is our music at an end?

Hazard. These sallies revive my drunk senses. Let vengeance die, not a man. Frivolous scoffs and taunts do not diminish humanity; you are still amenable to reason.

Tallow. Certainly.

Hazard. If condemned to die, how can you amend?

Tallow. Impossible.

Hazard. What can a prison do? Make the bad worse.

Tallow. No doubt.

Hazard. He's no righteous judge who seeks not to improve.

Tallow. I leave you to your private meditations.

Exit Tallow, followed, after groaning and striking his thighs in despair, by Hazard

Act 4. Scene 1. A cemetery

Enter Lucian and Judith, pulling a cart containing Mary's coffin

Lucian. A private grief is happier.

Judith. If so, our daughter should rejoice, for which place is more private than a grave and that she has?

Lucian. We are, the wind passes, and we are not. Yesterday, I knew a woman: where is she? If we peep inside her coffin, we'll find no woman.

Judith. Only what creeping creatures of the earth can like.

Lucian. To her absolute ruin, she has obtained what she most longed for: lasting fame, for ballads are already sung on her misfortune. Harken to one of them:

A maid, renowned for her rare poetry,

Composed a tale of woe; her subject rose,

And on her body proved her story true.

Judith. I have heard another:

A maid desired a pen and for her theme

Chose a man seeking blood. Her story done,

The man appeared, and foully spilled her ink.

Lucian. Twenty authors have beseeched me for her story.

Judith. One of them vowed that her catastrophe will be his triumph.

Lucian. They hurt paper with their writings.

Judith. Scholars who shunned her for the spoiled mush of their

essays now drool for the least crumb from her table.

Lucian. Critics bear tongues for candied diversions, but squeamish bowels for nourishment. They move forward like nails on a closing door.

Judith. Neglect of the ablest is their art.

Lucian. Our tragedy is no more than the people's news of the day.

Judith. Ah, ah! I'm worse than mad. Who killed her?

Lucian. Some lewd fellow who thinks to lie safely in a honeycomb of undetectability. But we'll smoke him out: Hazard and I have sworn it, and Hazard and I will do it.

Judith. I could spend the rest of my life railing with importunate vilifications against him and be well entertained.

Lucian. Her grave is unfinished.

Judith. It lacks its woman. Where is our gravedigger?

Enter Hazard appareled like a sexton and holding a shovel

Hazard. I'll play the sexton, replacing the one you hired.

Lucian. Did he give you a reason for his absence?

Hazard. The worst one: he can dig no more graves, having been dug into his own.

Judith. Can you play the vicar as well? Why not? In our grief and

confusion, the pastor was forgotten.

Lucian. Who is a priest but God's fool? And if we heed his sermon, who are we but the fool's fools? Hazard will do for exhortations.

Judith. His zeal will enlighten.

Hazard. We stand, dear people, before the open mouth of a murdered woman.

Lucian. Solemnity is the harbinger of wisdom.

Judith. He'll outbishop them all.

Hazard. Come forth and stand beside our common pit: do you not totter at this sight? Look down into our grave; indeed, every grave is ours. Why is our heart not stopped at the mere sight of it? How can we stare at this without running mad? Each citizen should rave and cavort in fear and horror every way in London streets, shouting: "One day, I'll die; I must one day die, and soon, tomorrow, perhaps today." Behold dust, her sole possession now. It is for this that we sweat, it is for this that we hate our neighbors, it is for this that we neglect the needy. Why? Must not all choice morsels of ambition eventually plunge into this stew of corruption? Here, in this pothole, it matters little whether we wantoned on satin, rested on linen, or groaned on straw: into worms' excrement must our bodies be compounded, and then into the excrement of

that excrement, all our loveliness
turned into vermicomposting.

Judith. His voice is a kind of
music to me.

Lucian. And my sobs, its heavy
accompaniment.

Hazard. Only yesterday a woman
cheered us with smiles and
kindness. Return to her in less
time than it takes for a neglected
garden to pain us and you'll
discover putrefaction's final
masterwork, and what was once a
woman will not be a mold, a
mound of mire and scum, or slime
where moles gather, but a thing
that can no longer be called a
thing.

Judith. Mary may yet be Mary
once again.

Lucian. How? Can you tell? Can a
bone revive in filth? Can fresh
ligaments knit to a bone again?
Can muscles renew with ligaments
and be made whole? Can flesh in
the worm's belly cover you a
second time?

Judith. Impossibilities engender
with impossibilities.

Lucian. Lost, lost! Ah, Mary, we
have lost you forever.

Judith. One grieving thought
buries another, and in the end we
lie hopeless in misery with our
heads in dust.

Hazard. I know a song without
music.

Here, dig, my spade, dig deeper
still!

Come, mortals, gaze in fear at my
abyss,

All that you own will one day be
my own.

The rich, the destitute, the brave,
the faint,

Alike in me most empty come to
rest.

Are you blighte, cheerful,
carefree, and serene?

My worms will eat away at your
assurance.

Here, old inhabitants already
lodge,

Having obtained eternal leases on
this ground.

Perhaps there was a time this
fleshless skull

Did not return our greetings with
a nod,

He was too occupied, too proud,
too grave:

Now lies he dormant, all his
business stopped,

And his possessions are not worth
my spit.

This thing's perhaps a judge, most
richly robed,

Who puffed his cheeks at men,
laughed at excuses,

Held rank among a thousand of
his kind:

Where are those jowls that
swelled, those brows that
frowned?

Who seeks his counsels now, or
his opinions?

That handsome youth once stole
from swooning belles

A room-full of adoring glances.

The mere wave of his hair
ensnared the heart
And made it beat for his and only
his.

But look now at the evening's
darling:

White mud dissolved in black,
Without hair, without tongue,
without eyes,

A seducer of worms.

Here, dig, my spade, dig deeper
still!

There's room for more, much
space for all of them.

Judith. I like that airless song, as
if coffin-bred.

Hazard. Is not the world a
charnel-house? We shovel bones
on a heap and call our labor
progress.

Lucian. Did I praise in vain his
abilities?- Hazard, you should
mount on pulpits or on tribunes;
you must be known.

Judith. Discover our daughter's
murderer first.

Hazard. Yes, that first.

Lucian. I'll help your work along.

Exit Lucian

Judith. Listen to a wish of mine,
Hazard.

Hazard. Ha? Another? Have I not
said that your brother-in-law died
by wishing, that your son died by
wishing, and that your daughter
died by wishing?

Judith. Why should a mother live
without her children? Hear me.

Hazard I must not.

Judith. Are you not my servant?
I'll reveal to you my best wish,
though my last. I'll hear my son
again, and I'll hear my daughter
again. These are the only services
I crave for.

Hazard. Wishes may be granted, I
fear.

Judith. When, Hazard?

Hazard. I cannot tell.

Re-enter Lucian with a shovel

Lucian. In life's banquet, we dance
on sepulchres.

Judith. How may that proverb be
applied?

Hazard. Our sins are old and walk
on crutches: why should we not
perish with them?

Judith. Well answered.

Lucian. Can the grave swallow our
pride?

Hazard. His stomach is not large
enough.

(Lucian and Hazard lower the
casket down

Lucian. The grave is the world's
womb, bearing bones not
children. O, misery of thought! My
daughter's hole is penetrated by
her coffin, thereby committing all
at once masturbation, incest, and
necrophilia. She has lost two
virginities.

Judith. Her final rest and mine.

Lucian. Why should I not stay below and lie with her? This is a cozy nest for my robin, where no falcon's shadow hovers.

Judith. Indeed, her breasts are red.-Hold, someone calls me.

Lucian. Ha, who?

Judith. I hear Edward's voice.

Lucian. A dream.

Judith. And Mary's voice, too.

Lucian. A dream's dream. Do we dream we live, or are we the dreams of dead people?

Judith. Is that you, Edward? It is, O, it is! I hear him, Lucian. - How are you, Edward?

Lucian. If he's dead, I doubt that he's well.

Judith. Is that you, Mary? It is, it is! Her voice exactly as it was, soft and determined. Speak again, daughter. Are you cold?

Lucian. The desert sun of Libya cannot warm her.

Hazard. She sways, sir: take care that she does not drop into the grave.-Madam, will you knock on her casket and expect to be let in? I fear that your daughter is not properly attired for social visits.

Judith. I hear her well from here.

Hazard. Heap clumps of dead earth that heavily fall with a dull thud on Mary's lowered coffin. Here lies her best place of rest, and ours.

Lucian. Let the vaults of death forever clank shut on the woman we knew as our daughter, who exists no more, although a

thousand trumpets blast against her ears, as dreamt of by some, in scandal and blasphemy against life's worth.

Judith. Ah, Mary, how glad I am to hear your voice again!

Lucian. My wife is going where few physicians can find her. One more mouthful for you, bottomless glutton!

Hazard. How will you bear this sight, dearest sir?

Lucian. As I have prevailed against others, friend. Marcus Aurelius is my infant pupil. I have lost my loved ones, and yet I'm satisfied; I have lost the savor of food and drink, and yet I'm satisfied.

Judith. Welcome, mortality, haunting table and bed.

Lucian. Come, we must go.

Exit Lucian

Hazard. Madam, will you follow?

Judith. Where? Have I not arrived?

Hazard. No, we must retire.

Exeunt Hazard and Judith

Act 4. Scene 2. The Everman house

Enter Lucian and Dr Pang

Lucian. And she has told this countless times.

Pang. I fear, sir, that I can offer little help.

Lucian. Will you try?

Pang. With all my abilities.

Lucian. She speaks more often to her voices than to me.

Pang. Should you not ask instead for her confessor? Religion runs where medicine can only limp.

Lucian. Banish dogmatic ignorance, with mouth, eyes, and ears clogged up like a mummy's. I'm the moth on that ancient garment. Reject and denounce that tradition which reviles the world and that spirit which loves lowness. What precious food can one extract from a dunghill? What ointment can be obtained from a dissolving carcass? What medication can be distilled from a nest of vipers? For converts to religion, wisdom is to slumber and to be instructed by dreams. Their understanding is a misunderstanding. They smack their lips in sleep and call that a banquet. What was true yesterday is not true today; morality is an approximation; values are what are good for you and hurt no one else; truths are probabilities. Let us achieve the greatness of the human spirit in this life, let us examine what is seen, let us quaff in full the bracing wine of distinguishable reality.

Pang. You say well.

Lucian. Who ever saw an atheist kill a pious neighbor because of his beliefs? But very holy men, approved by Gods, Goddesses, Godlets- what not?-, have in

frenzied fury stuffed friends in furnaces as infidels. They rule in indulgence or luxury, and when they ask: "Do you not starve on philosophy's dried-up fruit, sir?", I respond thus: "Not at all, for I consume hearty suppers on the bread and wine of your discomfiture."

Pang. Atheists are found everywhere except inside the grave, where they discover life-long error, find truth, embrace deliverance, and clap for joy at death's death. Some men see better in the darkness of earth than the brightness of air. Revelation will be a dishcloth to your quips and wipe the plate clean, wrung out with pain, and thrown away on a heap of refuse.

Lucian. Do graves have tongues? Can the strong man say: "I'll wrestle with death and win?"

Pang. With God, the weakest is strong.

Lucian. Doubt, not belief, is my mind's mistress and pleasure.

Pang. In my best days, I also consider a little.

Lucian. You study the brain?

Pang. I do, my own, especially.

Lucian. Is there an hieroglyphic in its workings that lies hidden from you?

Pang. More mysteries than ants in Egypt.

Lucian. You sweat and toil at solving the mind's algebra?

Pang. As schoolboys do.

Lucian. With heavy sighs, I watch my wife hover in and out of rooms, like breath married to vapors, not to me.

Enter Judith, walking backward

Pang. Now must careful scrutiny take out his scalpel and with the knife of discovery liberate your spouse from bondages of inveterate madness, although the blade be unburnished and dull.

Lucian. Question her closely.

Pang. Am I not a physician? Do not physicians ask questions? Leave me alone for that.

Lucian. Well.

Pang. Madam, I must speak to you.

Judith. Willingly.

Pang. Is that not a good answer? I like that reply.

Lucian. Continue, sir; you must not stop here.

Pang. Madam, your husband is worried about your state of mind.

Judith. And so am I for his.

Pang. Very reasonable. I have said so.- Now, madam, are you willing to help your husband?

Judith. Gladly, my daughter.

Pang. That's not so well. I do not like that answer so well as I did the previous one. Indeed, I do not like that answer at all.

Lucian. Learn more about her voices.

Pang. Madam, what do you mean by heeding to what is not?

Judith. Edward speaks in dreams, and in dreams Mary speaks.

Pang. Do not corpses lie securely shut away?

Judith. Indeed, the grave has no side-door for emergencies.

Pang. Should we interrogate dust?

Judith. In our great darkness, we scan like moles for divinity, but it is unrevealed and unverifiable.

What father loves his children and hides from them? What mother gives her children knives to strike each other to death? What master commands his servants to build a house efficiently without a plan? To be blunt, I do not believe that a thing exists because it is invisible; I do not worship a stone that gives me orders; I do not throw a stick in the air and say it fell because someone pushed it down.

Lucian. Well reasoned.

Pang. Admit, then, that your voices are dreams.

Judith. And yet such voices are preferable to men's.

Lucian. Thus, granted wishes kill us if ungranted ones do not. In any of its comforts, does medicine possess a herb to pull in the mind's waywardness?

Pang. She does, but my critics call it poison.

Lucian. Give it to her, for the garment of our existence can never warp to a looser thread than at the present hour.

Pang. Here, madam, you must partake of my concoction that

mitigates and soothes most dolours.

Judith. I'll swallow that.- With husband, son, and daughter, how am I not happy? There's some comfort in not being left alone.

Lucian. Let me embrace those words, though foolish.- Two ghosts are kissing each other.

Judith. What should a man and woman do together, except die? I'm pregnant with death and long to be delivered.

Pang. This strikes deeply. Sir, are my patient now?

Lucian. No, I'm well, though I stagger nearly to a fainting fit.

Pang. Men in good health are of little interest to me.

Lucian. To wallow daily in a mess of worry and great tribulations! How can I escape?

Pang. There she goes, unwillingly, it seems, as if to search out ears to hear her noisy silence.

Exit Judith, walking backward

Lucian. Did I exaggerate reasons for fearing?

Pang. No.

Lucian. Can a drug become the plaster on a wounded mind?

Pang. Mine will kill the voices if not her.

Lucian. O, may it subdue the mind's noise and restore her to her senses!

Pang. Take care that you do not hear them, for otherwise you'll

necessarily become my next patient. I cannot allow that failure of my treatment in one patient adds another for my profit, for that's quite contrary to the statutes of my ethical practices.

Enter Tallow

Tallow. I hope that a new friend, though unexpected at his hour, may yet enter into your house.

Lucian. Tallow, you are welcome.-

Dr Pang, greet with earnest handclasps my cherished companion, one who stints at nothing to help out my poor weal.

Tallow. Far less than you deserve.

Lucian. To my bosom, friend! You are the champion of the lists. You have beaten them all.

Tallow. I'll study to deserve better that appellation.

Pang. A tender scene of friendship moves me exceedingly, for physicians more often retch at the dregs of life than savor its wine.

Lucian. I have a great need for more friends, but where are they?

Tallow. Before I tasted your sweet fellowship, I often showed a female spider's pity after copulation, biting to death and enwrapping live prey for the mouth of her young. But my infant sons are dead, killed by a neglectful father. Did I once boast of accomplishments? A swarm of dead flies called remorse has blackened that dish of milk.

Nothing is left of my ill-gotten gains except regret, that blue viper with its head turned backward, which attacks the inwards worse than venom twenty times filtered and refined. But crime and its faithful attendants, torment and fear, are killed in this bosom, and will never return, for at last I have found a friend whom I trust and who in turn has obtained in me a friend more certain than his grave.

Pang. Friendship's the best medicine, although that bold statement, as you perhaps have noted, is quite contrary to my interests.

Enter Hazard

Hazard. Again? Can a man have the same dream twice? Reincarnation, are your ravings true? Can a man relive his past life without dying?

Lucian. Hazard, you must extend your hand in welcome to my very great friend.

Hazard. Ha?

Lucian. Why do you stand amazed?- Tallow, I present to you my secretary, who daily does for me what few men have ever striven to accomplish.

Tallow. We know each other, and I hope one day to call him friend.

Hazard. Friend to an assassin?

Lucian. Ha?

Hazard. Will you cheerfully embrace a man who raped and killed your daughter?

Lucian. Must I be the nurse to yet more madness in my house of pain?

Hazard. Will you place murder near your seat and not far away?

Tallow. He speaks in dreams that do now know him.

Lucian. He's my friend, Hazard: what incontestable proof beyond a surmise do you readily hold at hand in support of such a grievous accusation?

Hazard. (throwing down coins) None, sir, except tarnished coins that might belong to a beggar or to the winds. I'm silenced.

Lucian. Kick away and bury vain and disquieting investigations.

Hazard. For you, spent Tallow, I'll expel little breath. I bear a rapier in this sheath that has sharply rebuked more than one adversary. If you so much as step on my master's corns, rocks will not hide you. I'll pull you roughly from them by the feet and play the barber on the soles, as if a thick rug of hairs had grown there. If, during that operation, I observe the least frown of impatience, I vow on my honor that you'll eat for an entire year only what grows in city puddles, dung dissolved in sweat will be your bath-water, and a pile of dust to grovel in will be your hospital.

Tallow. Beat silently, my heart.

Hazard. (sniffing) Is there a fire in this hall? Or do I smell, because of its rebellion against the righteous, flesh ready for roasting?

Tallow. So, sir, enough, more than enough.

Pang. I hope that's well spoken.

Hazard. In the excess of futility, should a man attempt to push the waves back to the sea? Can you swallow a fig and give it back to me? Who does not merit forgiveness?

Exit Hazard

Tallow. I like him, and may learn to love.

Lucian. His suspicions are clearly out of the way.

Tallow. No doubt.

Pang. I sell powders to treat bad judgment, too.

Lucian. Cast away approved follies, for he's certainly well.- And yet, despite my honest words, I'll watch you carefully, Tallow, with eyes capable of finding out iniquities; not that I suspect you, but I know Hazard as a shrewd observer of men, and one of you is looking on an evil mirror of himself. I would rather be the most foolish dupe in creation, an eternal source for men's laughter and derision, than lose either friend.

Tallow. Huh, huh.- If I have done you any wrong, I'll repay it with a life of service that will astonish

humankind. I leave you, my friend, but will return without fail tomorrow in your hour of need. Much have I performed that must be pardoned, but be assured that you'll obtain from a strong and cunning man who despises his faults the complete benefit of his contrition.

Exit Tallow

Pang. He has suffered.

Lucian. Much!

Pang. I perceive a kind of crucifixion on his face, his brows being the arms of a cross, his nose the hill of desolation, and his parted lips the grave.

Lucian. I have entire confidence that henceforth he'll lift his face as the deadliest cloud of darkness against his enemies and mine.

Pang. After your wife's sleep, I'll revisit her to push her remedy forward.

Lucian. I thank your kind attentions.

Pang. May the least of them make her entirely well.

(A loud explosion is heard)

Lucian. Ha! What's that?

Pang. That horrid blast came from where I last saw your friend.

Lucian. Are all my stars deadly traitors?

Re-enter Tallow

Are you preserved, Tallow?

Tallow. They have burned no worse than my shirt-sleeves and a few tufts of hair, good friend.

Lucian. Who?

Tallow. A pack of desperate fools mistook me for some heinous criminal, some corrupt degenerate who raped at least four of their daughters. With deplorable vindictiveness, crazed fathers succeeded I know not how in furtively planting some fatal explosive under my coach. But, as they gazed in happy expectation, I noticed the object and threw it back at them, gentle sirs.

Lucian. O, my spirit almost leaped away with fright.

Tallow. Those innocents thought it is a very easy thing to kill a man and then go dancing. Not so. While their thoughts jigged in expectation of gladness, an olive overturned their bowels and broke their arms and legs. Which floor is as slippery as the one covered with blood? Whoever plots secretly in the night a careful murder must necessarily be found out in the sunshine and noon-time of discovery.

Exit Tallow

Pang. A resourceful man!

Lucian. I know no light like Tallow's for discoveries.

Pang. Exploded men may be whimpering in their warm blood on the cold ground. I'll go to them at once. This unlooked-for tragedy may turn into profitable business for me.

Exeunt Dr Pang and Lucian

Act 5. Scene 1. The Everman house

Enter Hazard and Tallow

Hazard. I have never seen a ghastlier transformation in a man. He seems like his ghost's ghost, more desolate than any fabled creature in hell.

Tallow. I reel on looking at his wasted form. Hazard, let us, as able gardeners, graft our mutual sympathies for Lucian into a gentle hybrid. Do not doubt and dismiss my varnished reformation. Amity is near and murder far away. You last saw me when I ranged freely with the bowels of a tiger, preying alike on enemies and friends. But the beast inside has been ripped away, sir, by injustices, I mean lost love, lost revenues, and lost children. Now that I have learned to hug my disasters and to kiss their authors, I devour only, for penance and expiation, the tainted meat of my transgressions.

Hazard. Roses and lilies thrive where dung is spread, but so do weeds.

Tallow. I have chewed on and have spit away the nettles of my infamy. My eyes have watered me to a child's garden, where I know no reason to be ashamed, and where I'm redeemed as a second man. I'm a man not made evil by evil, but by evil made good.

Hazard. I believe you only since this minute. I never knew your sons, Tallow, and yet, in condolance for your loss, I'll weep for them tonight.

Tallow. My every thought is now a wife to Lucian's wellbeing.

Hazard. His spouse is nearly lost to phantoms born in winds. He has a great need of you.

Tallow. He does. I know it. I'm part of his family in feeling though not in blood. Should not a man sometimes suffer for the sake of his friends, or must he always stare in bed in the cold of a lonely darkness?

Hazard. Behold man's chief affliction on his bed of pain, and prepare to grieve with him in bitterness.

(Lucian is revealed in his bed)

Tallow. How do you fare, Lucian?

Lucian. Were I paler, I would disappear.

Hazard. No better?

Lucian. My disease is an absent-minded executioner, who strikes the poor prisoner but forgets to kill him.

Tallow. Tut, man, merely an idle weakness soon rid of.

Lucian. My sickness is a shy assassin, observing and keeping still in the corner of banquet-halls. But when he comes, he comes for blood.

Tallow. Oh, no, I'm sure we'll see you caper like a love-fevered youth in a galliard next week.

Lucian. The physician enters the room to examine my body. I look up at him with hopeless hope. Although my life depend on his nod, he is unwelcome. He bends over me to explore he knows not what. I cringe at his touch and seem already buried in my sheets. His face shows surprise, and I'm dejected that he's surprised. He next shows consternation, and I shudder at his consternation. Then he shows fear, and I'm in mortal anguish and kick against the coverlet in a frenzy because he fears. Lastly, he attempts to conceal his fear in a wan smile, and on that mouth I see my grave. Hazard. Imagination will kill him if not the disease.

Tallow. I fear all the more for his condition, as my protector and friend. If he expire, my life will seem a kind of death before a death.

Lucian. The physician looks down on my body and sees nothing. I pine because he sees nothing. In his ignorance, all my organs are suspicious. My heart, my kidneys, my belly, my liver, my spleen, and my head, like intimidated witnesses in court, are struck dumb with an apprehension that appears like guilt, sealing their conviction and condemnation.

Hazard. That's not necessarily so.

Tallow. He heeds only himself.

Lucian. The physician summons colleagues at my bedside for a consultation. They murmur and hesitate. I tremble because their opinions do not agree. They interrogate my bowels with concern, but there's small comfort in that, only a woeful revelation of uncertainty and vague surmise.

Hazard. Alas, poor friend!

Lucian. After analyses of blood and urine, the physician re-enters the room and admits an error in diagnosis. He seeks to remedy his fault, and I'm in a great dread and torment because he erred once, he may yet err again. I add to his error incessant fears, that perhaps cause more harm than the disease. My pains are the text he learns from, my agonies are the foundation of his experience, while I learn nothing. No patient can practice how to die, for we only do it once.

Hazard. You perhaps fear for nothing.

Lucian. Do pains warn us when we are well? A hurricane may blow from a man's sneeze; a mouse's droppings may annihilate entire squadrons. Men have choked on the thigh-bone of a wren and have strangled themselves with twine. A feather can stifle us, a pin can stab us to death, and a speck of dust can bury us. There's deadly danger in swallowing musty porridge or in ascending uneven stairs.

Hazard. Groundless apprehensions!

Lucian. What fear may do! Seneca bled himself to death because his master frowned. I have seen courageous soldiers jump down from towers to escape flea-bites and die from fright on observing a friend's shadow at the window.

Tallow. Needless passions!

Lucian. At my work-desk, on my supper-table, in my bed, I incline each minute a little more towards my grave. Each ticking of the clock is a drowsy nurse's tongue that tells me I must sleep. The wrinkles on my hands and face are graves ready to swallow me. I'm a cemetery alive with hideous germinations.

Hazard. A wart can be scratched into a dangerous scab.

Lucian. Hear a wish of mine, Hazard, a modest one: never to die, but, Phoenix-like, daily to

arise from death and plan my resurrection. Can you grant me that? That's perfect happiness, there's no other. I gibber at death, and smile foolishly, for he's a potentate too fearsome for flattery. Do you hear, Hazard? You can bestow any wish, I believe. Prolong my life, friend, stretch out my lonely highroad to a limitless view. Do it now.

Hazard. How? I'm the hopeless agent of an unknown power.

Lucian. Will I, medicine's unhappy believer, with a dying hand search out for one more weed to ease me? We tread on herbs that can cure us, but walk on unconcerned, because we know not what they do.

Tallow. No doubt you speak wisely.

Lucian. Unless life eternal is promised to me, I'm a carcass someone forgot to bury.

Hazard. What, an atheist with hopes of everlasting life? Ha! Ha!

Lucian. You laugh with good reason. I'll clear away my almost rotted judgment by retracting my wish and replacing it with a wiser one: let me live until I reconcile myself with death. Fear of death is the only death. If that fear be removed, I care as little for never-ending life as I do for lost childhood. Do I despair because I did not live the day before my birth? Draw near and push aside

that curtain, behind which death's unknown language may be read.

(Lucian's portrait in death is revealed)

Hazard. O, this portrait is death's exact copy.

Lucian. My thoughts hourly sink into the open grave of that face.

Tallow. I greatly fear, my dear friend, that, without more cheerful amusements, we'll lose you in a maze of dismal confabulations.

Lucian. I bought my shroud, which forever covers trivial pastimes. Will you wrap me in it? An exact fit should please my mourners.

Tallow. Friends help each other die.

Lucian. Otherwise, of what use are they?

Hazard. This scene exceeds nightmares when I scream on awakening.

Lucian. Do I not appear prepared?

Tallow. Like a violet on a mound of snow ready to be crushed underfoot.

Lucian. We are snow falling on the ground, beauteous in youth and then mud.

Hazard. I hear Dr Pang's rapid steps.

Lucian. He hurries to fetch my fee before I die.

Enter Dr Pang

Tallow. Here's your patient, sir, whose friends breathe only in the hope of his immediate relief.

Hazard. Speak, doctor, only speak hopefully.

Pang. Medicine is a mute agent for a country he knows nothing of: he's paid by fears for the name of diseases.

Lucian. Your wisdom, doctor, is a lamp inside a tomb, profiting no one.

Tallow. In the meantime, I'll carefully attend to your wife's needs, Lucian.

Lucian. Do, Tallow. I thank you, friend.

Tallow. I'll be the helpful spoon that feeds her back to health and you.

Exit Tallow

Hazard. Compared to him, Pylades hated his Orestes.

Lucian. The gentlest man I ever knew.

Pang. I observe from your garment that my care has inspired in you absolute confidence of recovery. Well, let us lift this cloth a little and evaluate these grave dangers in earnest one more time.

Lucian. What breeds in me like death's child? Can you tell?

Pang. Yes, I can tell that you are sick.

Lucian. You teach me what I know.

Pang. I can tell you more: you are sick from inoperable fears.

Soldiers of your earthly guard have executed your protecting angels from heaven. You must rid yourself of them.

Lucian. Tell me how. Your science is like semen spilt on barren earth, or like frozen embryo preserved for idle observations.

Pang. Fears are will-o'-the-wisps that mislead the giddy patient beyond my powers.- Hold, I have found something, new but not good, on the side and at the front as well, that will impress you.

Lucian. What, here? What do these fearful faces mean?

Pang. I have good news for you.

Lucian. Ha? What is it?

Pang. You'll surely die within a month.

Lucian. Is that your good news?

Pang. It is, for death will likely tread on you lower than grass before friends hear you wail in pitiable weakness and debility. Death is a better friend than friends. Although fears have made you impotent towards the cold lady, this sickness will prod her on, and, between her hesitant thighs, make you tremble in ecstasy.

Hazard. Ah, speak better, doctor.

Lucian. I have fed on delicious pudding only to find at the bottom of the bowl a roach. Ah, vain prophets of Egypt, Bethlehem, Mecca, and Lumbini, whose deeds are impossible, except to fools or liars, may your

teachings of goodness, that have caused more harm than deliberate evil, find their graves with mine, so that I can observe in the end the best fortune this glorious world may hope for.

Pang. A very reasonable exclamation! I see you still carry your wits about you.

Lucian. Are you a physician and cannot heal? Which rich vessel is emptier?

Pang. I sometimes cure with words, rarely with deeds. Nevertheless, my fingers have ably detected the source of your continuous sweats and pallor, but these can only help in burying you. Your condition is bad, worse, the worst that I ever thought, expected, or imagined. This almost brings tears to eyes that have much seen. A tumor the size of a ship- no, a very armada of tumors! O, these are festering growths, malignant in the extreme. How could I have missed them? You are advanced, sir, far advanced, but in a way I do not like at all. I would not be you now, no, not you. A clod pinched between two fingers will within four weeks be worth as much as your fair body.

Lucian. I almost swoon with fear. Who can help me in my despair?

Pang. Most infections are incurred in hospitals. I regret to say without further circumlocutions that my solicitous ministrations

on your behalf for the past six months have only helped along your disease. I tell you frankly and boldly: to be a little worse than your present state is certain death.

Lucian. I know it, I believe it, as I know and believe in extinction.

Pang. A patient should believe his physician, not his disease, for although the physician err in saying that he's well, the happy patient believes the error, and is thereby not sick.

Hazard. Is there a remedy for these pains?

Pang. Yes, there is, if dying can be called a remedy.

Lucian. (weeping Ah!

Pang. Tears are helpful and perhaps needed, but be advised: you bear tumors that say: "tu meurs", whose translation from the French tongue means "you die".

Lucian. There's some comfort in dying in two languages.

Pang. Thick growths swarm from arm-pits to navel, startling ones. Be prepared for sharp pains, O, the very sharpest, and most vehement. I cannot not hide the awful prospects that await you; otherwise I would fail in my duty. These twinges are trickles from a breach where a flood of unutterable pain must overflow-I have seen it before and can only wonder-, this fever will inevitably shake you in an earthquake of

sorrows. The cannonballs shot on your health cannot be fought against with all the vessels of nature's great medicines and must batter, destroy, and level, though the captain plead for mercy, all forts of resistance to the ground.

Hazard. You feed a glutted maw.

Pang. Such a pullulation should have killed you months ago.

Lucian. I'm glad of it. That's my likeliest hope. If I still live, I may live still, provided Hazard be Hazard, and that forever.

Pang. How can the state thrive when tumors, somber magistrates and eloquent orators, have pronounced a death sentence against all honorable flesh? I know that even trivial cases are unsolvable enigmas to ignorance blinking through smudged glasses; I know that, as a prudent man, I should perhaps put a finger on my lips and, as some do, waver a little. Instead, quite resolutely, I declare without hesitation that such palpable excrescences can never know remission.

Lucian. I greatly rejoice at this conclusion.

Pang. To speak truthfully- when have I not?- you should already be dead.

Lucian. And yet any hope of better health seems like a newborn child choking in his blood. As soon as I fear, I feel pains and as soon as I feel pains, I fear.

Pang. A trained practitioner can easily explain such symptoms. You fear because you are ill: does not a pot of boiling water burn?

Lucian. Have you anything to offer me, doctor, in my utmost distress and confusion?

Pang. I do; drink this mortal potion some call medication.

Lucian. (drinking it Ah!

Pang. Sometimes a little poison expels a greater one: I have been taught useful secrets at least.

Lucian. I believe only in Hazard's secrets now.

Hazard. I know none.

Pang. I would like to strike at your disease, but, Philoctetes-like, I look on my shoulders and see no bow, I gaze at my hands and find no arrow. Ah, had I followed the more comforting classic stage! My errors have enriched me, but yet do you believe, because I carry more coins than cordials, that I'm composed of metal?

Lucian. I feel better.

Pang. Impossible! That false draught contained mere water.

Lucian. I think I can stand.

Pang. My publications have conclusively shown the contrary, in that my manner of fooling can sedate but never cure.

Lucian. I'll rise despite your eminent opinions.

Hazard. I'll help you.

Lucian. (rising No need, no need!

Pang. (taking out his note-book I'm surprised only for an instant.

The true man of science does not shut his eyes when his hypothesis is smoked away to oblivion, but, on the contrary, seeks out and observes new phenomena with greater care and attention.

Lucian. Now! Now! I can. Do I kick at you, imperious malady?

Pang. O, a miraculous marvel! This new development in the disorder requires shrewd observations with a level, unblinking eye that knows what to look for and discovers with precision and celerity the underlying reason for it.

Lucian. Ha! Ha! Ha! Who doubts that I'll live?

Hazard. The bread of laughter is often sopped in tears of grief.

Pang. Anguish not only makes the patient ignore his pains, acting on the mind as an opiate, but puts out consciousness of disease as well: a new placebo. This discovery will amaze colleagues who have many times exclaimed against my methods of treatment. Henceforth, all my patients will gorge on large mouthfuls of placebo and be certain to live longer than theirs.

Enter Tallow, running

Tallow. Ah, I can no longer bear your sufferings, my friend. Why did I not early this morning cut my throat together with my beard? I'm all water with running

and grief. Your wife is dead, Lucian.

Lucian. Only her ghost disappears: why then do I cry?

Tallow. I gave her food every day, which only fed her melancholy. Early this forenoon, she doze awhile; then, with a startled gasp, awoke and said: "In my sleep a servant arose, shook away from my bed-sheets two precious rubies, and carelessly dropped them in refuse," and with deep groans expired.

Hazard. Distress added hugger-mugger to more distress.

Tallow. Snow on snow on the peeling body of a leper.

Pang. Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! I chortle, sir, and yet I do it in anger. You have stolen a laugh from me, vile comedian; that metaphor should have been mine.

Hazard. To console him for his losses would be like lulling sated rats asleep in a crib where the baby's face is gnawn away.

Pang. And therefore I recommend you not to do it.

Tallow. His silence affrights me more than sudden shrieks in the night.

Hazard. I'm more worried than I ever was, though every word on his bed of denial shook my entire frame, worse than an old man's resting palsy.

Pang. I leave you for further consultations of a heavy note, where I must painfully and with

sad regret announce the imminent death of at least six of my patients. Pity me, friends. O, O, O, my sufferings are greater than can be revealed or imagined. We have seen the atheist pinched, and his protests and lamentations have drawn tears from our eyes. But who thinks of the doctor?

Exit Dr Pang

Lucian. Ah, leave me, friends, before I leave myself.

Hazard. I live only in your service.

Exit Hazard

Lucian. First my children, then my dearest one. Nevertheless, tears will not blind; cries will not deafen; I walk on.

Tallow. Let us, as only friends can, silently converse in your garden.

Lucian. As you wish.

Exeunt Lucian and Tallow

Act 5. Scene 2. A wooded area

Enter Hazard and Dr Pang

Hazard. How readily are we undone! We gaze upward, a cloud floats by, and our eyes darken.

Pang. I have said so.

Hazard. The eyes of your judgment are not strained with looking through shards of crooked glass, doctor. I thought at

first you were a nullity divided by itself, which equals an infinite fool. But I erred and strayed like Kepler's musical planets. In support of your prognosis, a surgeon made an incision into my friend's supposed tumors, whereby, after gazing for a minute in wonder, he threw away his scalpel and wept. Lucian's gentle flame sputters in a filthy light, and, for further torment, is not snuffed out.

Pang. In the annals of my experience, this case is the heaviest turd I have ever probed, not to be expelled by any means, and without doubt must be introduced as a new chapter in my book of medicine, which some have termed a little academy of wonders.

Hazard. And others, a compendium of impossibilities.

Pang. These are the words of detractors, sir, who laugh at every prescription I write. They say, after Aristotle, that men are creatures of habit, because I'm always wrong. They also say that Galen, had he known of my existence, would have deeply buried his texts in dung, because I misconstrue them so abominably and mislead so many able students, that my heavy note-books are excellent for patients with dysentery, and that if some beetles give birth in excrement, then my ideas for new treatments

must originate from there. Any opinion of mine, they flatly declare, is a defecation, and the worst public menace since the last plague. Were you as famous as I, you would also suffer from impudent and scurrilous mockeries, the shame to all ambitious endeavors.

Hazard. No doubt. But do you not rail and, like a baboon by day or a bat by night, show your teeth at them?

Pang. I do not. Instead, I sit on an honored chair at the university, and smile. I cradle my book thus, and, in certain knowledge that defamation must in the end swallow the hard nut of his own bowels, smirk in satisfaction. I lear, sir, I lear almost all day.

Enter Lucian, tottering

Lucian. No man has been sicker.

Hazard. O, O, yesterday you seemed like a drooping oak, but now you have become what torturers have failed to imagine, a root too infested to be burnt, a wave from a sea of vomit. Friends avoid your sight with bitter tears.

Lucian. Should I wish for health?

Hazard. You see what wishes do.

Lucian. Who can look at me without infection?

Pang. Infection, sir, is a domain on which I graze happily, if not where I dream. I'm the lawmaker who

proclaims for or against such conclusions.

Lucian. Look here: black matter seeps from my burning ears.

Pang. Alas, no man, in my experience, can live long with this sort of pain, this over-affliction that begs for death. Your brain is melting, Lucian: fungi take up their residence there and build a fire to warm themselves. It is irremediable. I have said so. You must die.

Lucian. To my utmost grief, I cannot.

Pang. Death is an unpracticed whore, vexing without satisfying.

Lucian. I'm also troubled by continuous pains in my throat.

Pang. Your throat also?

Lucian. Should I not tremble for my morrows when polluted stuff dribbles from the lips?

Pang. Ha, you must die, Lucian. Do it at once. Tomorrow will not be a good day. Such aches come to a fearful end.

Lucian. Do not surgeons carry knives, are not knives made of steel, and does not steel pierce men's flesh? Stab me, doctor, and stab hard.

Pang. An oath prevents my hand from doing what it should.

Hazard. Pity the man, not the disease.

Pang. Well, your friendly apothecary must offer you a sudden poison, whereby he's sure

to receive many thanks from your friends.

Lucian. Let me cram my mouth full with it.

Pang. The contents in this vial, unless I'm no doctor, should kill you in ten seconds.

Lucian. Ten seconds are my eternity.

(A long pause)

Pang. What, not dead yet?

Lucian. Not at all. On the contrary, I feel much better.

Pang. An unknown disease is attacking my credibility. If I stay longer, my livelihood must eventually be thwarted and dismayed. Hereafter, I'll cure or amend what is possible.

Exit Dr Pang

Hazard. Has anyone seen stranger medicine?

Lucian. Strangle me, Hazard.

Hazard. Ah, to ease you, my fingers would gladly form a knot against parents, wife, and children.

Lucian. Do it with this taut rope.

(Hazard pulls and drags him about, but without being able to kill him)

Hazard. These are ridiculous attempts at killing you. You can no more die than humanity can

live forever. You have wished it and here it is, no man more miserable, you have wished it, and in the valleys, in the mountains, no man can suffer more.

Lucian. Could I have guessed that vermiculation would one day be an exquisite favor?

Hazard. Your condition exceeds wonders disbelief has laughed at.

Lucian. No man lives in himself, no man dies in himself, but by, with, and through another: by another, as he may learn from that person, with another, as he may exchange with that person, and through another, as he may acquit himself of that person. Each life represents a few words, others form our sentences, but the book's unread by anyone.

Hazard. Another friend may help or hinder.

Enter Tallow

Lucian. I was an abandoned prisoner, sucking on the teats of solitude. That's not so now. Who languishes when friends remember him? Because you are, I am.

Tallow. Ever devoted.

Hazard. Yours.

Lucian. Review each stage of our life, friends.

Hazard. As a child, I play.

Lucian. Seek to imagine.

Tallow. As a young man, I study.

Lucian. Seek to acquire.

Hazard. As an older man, I speak and write.

Lucian. Seek to distinguish.

Tallow. As a dying man, I'm troubled.

Lucian. Seek to abandon. The grave asks for its dead: who dares to refuse? We live because others have died: should we not die? Are we very sorrowful? When a seed falls on the ground, the earth is replenished.

Tallow. You kill mournful anguish.

Lucian. Our host asks us to come in: do we stay outside?

Hazard. When we find the shore at twilight, should we row back towards the ocean?

Lucian. Unbelief is our glorious life and afterlife. Do not deceive yourselves: they hate the world who love the next. We do not examine mysteries that priests can solve. We reason and have things to do.

Hazard. Note well his words, Tallow; hear at last a prophet who speaks truthfully.

Lucian. Is the rose less beautiful because one day it will wither?

Tallow. We are the dew on the rose among men.

Hazard. But his contagion, I hear, may spread to the entire world. You must live alone, in the woods, unseen by any man or woman, scarcely by any mouse. I'll build a cabin for you, Lucian.

Tallow. And I'll fetch materials for it.

Lucian. My house should be my grave.

Hazard. Go, Tallow; help him in his infirmity.

Tallow. I'll conduct you beneath trees, where shadows darken all sad considerations.

Exeunt Tallow and Lucian

(Hazard chops on a piece of wood; a cry is heard)

Hazard. What ghastly cry has made winter in my blood?-
Lucian?

(Hazard chops wood; a second cry is heard)

Hazard. Lucian?

(Hazard chops wood; a third cry is heard)

Enter Lucian, covered with blood

Lucian. You have maimed me, worthy friend, but yet I thank you. You have hacked away impatience and pruned off weaknesses and subversions.

Hazard. Ah, will your pains ever cease? One cannot take breath before another misfortune falls on you. These horrid wounds must be attended to.

Lucian. What wounds? I am, Hazard, though death approach.

Hazard. I have killed brother, son, daughter, and wife, and yet you live. But should I prattle while my friend bleeds? A roll of bandages must be discovered or created anew.

Exit Hazard and re-enter Tallow

Lucian. Can Aetna burn? Can cannonballs obliterate? Can we choke to death on a beggar's discarded meat? Supply me with these and I'll gladly embrace you.

Tallow. Let me stanch the heavy stream, close up crevices, not gashes-

Lucian. I cannot die, Tallow, that's my only torment now.

Tallow. I have fed you, kept watch over your sleep, chased enemies away, and yet, despite my care, your soul is spiked on the wheel of your own body, forgotten by his torturers.

Lucian. Call me fortune's favorite.

Tallow. How?

Lucian. Am I not visited by happy thoughts? Do I not welcome the destitute and pardon the deserving? Do I not speak with you and Hazard? Thus, in conclusion, it must not be said that I exist merely, for I super-exist, in my friends. I pronounce my own epitaph.- My wounds cry out; I begin to faint in a deadly swoon.

Re-enter Hazard with bandages

Hazard. I found these in my basket.

Lucian. Do we put on clothes when we enter our home? I have defeated Hazard's curse, the only one who has. I'm the one who did it, I, only I. Life will not say: "I never knew you, Lucian," for you are here, unknown ones, and listen.- I was. (he dies

Tallow. What, is he reconciled?

Hazard. He has done quite well for himself, then.

Tallow. Lucian, I'll bury your thoughts in mine until I die and your sufferings will be my doctrine.

Hazard. I'll join you in those studies. From the present minute to our deaths, Lucian will be our theme, and the unhappy memories of his life, our consolation.

Exeunt Tallow and Hazard, bearing off Lucian

Cesare and Lucrezia Borgia

Dramatic characters (18)

Rodrigo Borgia, Pope Alexander VI
Cesare Borgia, son of Alexander VI
Lucrezia Borgia, daughter of
Alexander VI

Giovanni Sforza, count of Pesaro,
first husband of Lucrezia

Alfonso of Aragon, duke of
Bisceglie, second husband of
Lucrezia

Alfonso d'Este, third husband of
Lucrezia

Francesco Gonzaga, marquis of
Mantua

Pietro Bembo, love-poet

Niccolo Machiavelli, secretary of
the Florentine chancery

Michele da Corella, officer of
Cesare Borgia

Leonardo Da Vinci, engineer of
Cesare Borgia

Girolamo Savonarola, preacher in
Florence

Vitellozzo Vitelli, nobleman

Girolamo Mancioni, court-poet

Adriano da Corneto, cardinal

Giuliano Della Rovere, cardinal,
later Pope Julius II

Gonzalo de Córdoba, Spanish
captain

King Juan of Navarre, brother-in-
law of Cesare Borgia

Soldiers, attendants, cardinals,
Lucrezia Borgia's baby, Pedro
Caldes, and Pantasilia

Act 1. Scene 1. Vannezza
Cattanei's house in Rome. 1497

Enter Cesare Borgia and Michele
da Corella

Cesare. To him belong the honor
and the arms,
The influence that should be mine
alone.

Michele. As cardinal of fair
Valencia's fold,
And sixteen thousand ducats with
your charge,
A gardenful of reasons may be
found
To cut aside the bitter careless
weed.

Cesare. The duke of Gandia leads
a worthless life.

I warned him of that, but with
little heed

He goes youth's prickly way. He
walks with whores

And buys lands for mere
pleasure's gain. No show

Of reverence for stern Maria's
flesh,

A princess given by the king of
Spain?

Against Mahomettans Fernando
raged,

Fought in Granada, brushing
turbaned fleas

Aside from their Alhambra
citadel,

Expulsed the unconverted false-
tongued Jews,

Like busy ants plowed by Christ-
loving zeal,

With Portugal discovered newer
worlds,
Converting many habitants to
faith

And him to wealth: can such a
ruler feign

To smile on his own daughter's
infamy?

My brother idly wastes Farnese
goods,

A cardinal too near Orsini's love,
Against whose insolence in our
campaigns

The soldier was declared no
soldier, for

The meanest pierce with straws
his armories.

Michele. A brother's praises are
too generous.

Cesare. Blown violet before April,
unchewed piece

Inside the cheeks of fortune,
which a breeze

Or wormy toothpick may at will
dislodge!

Michele. A roasting apple may be
left in fire.

Cesare. Orsini's clan- no, worse
than even this,

Vitelli's, Della Rovere's,- because
we leave

Shears rusting in our dismal
garden house,

On Borgia grounds spread like
infected shrubs,

Unholy fruits made fertile with
men's blood.

The duke of Gandia, when Vitelli
frowns,

Is beaten, forcing us to restitute

The properties of proud Orsini's house.

Michele. But yet with tall Gonzalo de Córdoba

Your brother fought in Ostia, held secure

With ardor by the warrior-cardinal,

And was received victorious. For that feat,

Gonzalo wears with pride the golden rose.

Cesare. And fortune's brother showered by the pope

With Pontecorvo, Terracina- ha!

Thus valueless incompetence is kissed

With fond paternal gladness. I hate that.

Moreover, this son leaps on Sancia's bed,

Our languid Giofre's wife, with whom I couch.

Michele. The death of Pedro Luis opens a

New way for younger sons whose hopes may rise.

Cesare. In Alexander's heart, a younger son

Begs and obtains first place, and I must rot

At home disused while Borgia foes prepare.

House-valor is to chase their flies away.

Michele. Men find in you a killer in the shell.

Hatched cuckoos sweep their brothers from the nest

Together with the eggs for richer fare.

Will you with Gandia ride in state to gape

At Federigo's coronation as

The king of Naples, Spain's usurped estate?

Cesare. No, for unlike this king's, on Juan's head

We should prepare a coronet of blood.

No storm of words against his waywardness:

The carp thrives in still waters; where I seem

To rest or sleep, I'll open wide the mouth.

The first deed of our royal founder was

To kill his brother: may old Rome in me

Be resurrected in a Vestal flame.

Exeunt Cesare and Michele

Act 1. Scene 2. The castle of St Angelo in Rome. 1497

Enter Pope Alexander VI and Francesco Gonzaga

Alexander VI. We once secured a pact with Aragon, Alfonso's kingdom, spurned by Charles of France:

Now we make Federigo surer still.

Francesco. But in what manner, mighty holiness?

Alexander VI. That must be left unknown till it is done.

Francesco. Bind him in rings of friendship; otherwise,

Expect Orsini to rule Italy.

Alexander VI. Our parrot cries "Orsini" in its sleep,

So often we pronounce that loathed name.

Francesco. Orsini, smiling, take what should be yours.

Alexander VI. For raising arms in France's aid, a bull

Of excommunication is decreed To strike all the Orsini to the heart

With confiscation of great lands and goods.

Francesco. O, best of news when hated foes decline!

Alexander VI. Castilians rob Italians while they rage.

Francesco. Whom else should I fight for in city-states,

When hated rivalries of man and man

Serve to augment the power of the church?

Alexander VI. Which schoolboy has not conned Gonzaga's deeds Of valor, captain of our mighty league

Against ambitious occupying France?

Francesco. Am I to be the foe supreme against

All heretics against the papal see?

Then I imbibe what most I thirsted for.

Alexander VI. We first employ you on a task that mars

The sum of all our pleasures. Our kind son-

Francesco. His absences freeze a fond father's heart.

Alexander VI. Of Juan, our dear son, we hear no news.

Francesco. No? Not from Giofre or Cesare-

Enter Cesare Borgia

Alexander VI. Where lies our son?

Cesare. My brother not alive in his dad's arms?

Alexander VI. No, neither with his wife, nor with his-

Cesare. Whores? No doubt in a narrower place.

Enter Michele da Corella with attendants bearing the coffin of Juan Borgia

Alexander VI. Ha! Ha! Whose coffin is this?

Michele. Almighty holiness, your own loved son's.

Alexander VI. Ah, no! Who dares to murder a pope's son?

Michele. Oh, that, I fear, cannot be known as yet.

Cesare. I knew that could but be my brother's end.

Michele. Your mother, feasting with her Juan, thought To reconcile two froward brothers, but-

Cesare. The duke of Gandia stabbed to death in streets

Of Rome by light of day with nine
knife-wounds!

Alexander VI. O, O, our son!

Cesare. O, O, my brother!

Alexander VI. Reveal at once and
boldly, ere we die

From grief at this sad sight and
burdensome,

Whose arm rose treacherously
over him?

Cesare. Perhaps the vile Orsini's,
madly stung

By tall Virginio's murder, or
perhaps

Ascanio Sforza, hated cardinal of
lust.

This son received his enemies as
friends.

Alexander VI. Out, singers,
adolescents, a swift end

To indoor games and hunting,
which a pope

Should now neglect, in mind of
tragedy.

Cesare. Or else perhaps Giovanni
Sforza's arm,

Count of Pesaro and your
daughter's spouse

Is much to blame for murdering
your son.

Alexander VI. As the most carnal
man we should repent.

In seeking to be as we seem, we
say

There is a God and gospel, but we
act

As if there is no heaven and no
hell.

Our deeds are governed by a
pagan heart,

Not by the promised tongue that
demonstrates

To every Christian how we should
prepare.

Conduct with painful steps for our
despite

The vicar of Saint Mark,
Dominican

With book and sword, and at his
louring side

The cardinal of hate inveterate.

Francesco. Lombardian people
rush to hear in throngs

Savonarola's sermons of white
fire,

As if in triumph at a wedding
feast,

When he but wishes for a bad
world's end.

Exeunt Francesco and Michele
with attendants bearing the coffin;
enter Cardinal Giuliano Della
Rovere and Girolamo Savonarola

Alexander VI. We, guilty and
contrite, should bear the taunts
Of foes, rescind the past, redeem
ourselves

By stifling simony. We'll retribute
All confiscated goods, reform the
church

To her initial pristine state of
love.

The love we bore our son
commands these oaths.

Girolamo S. How, weeping for a
dead son, though perhaps

In heaven's fields alive, not for
your sins?

Know well our doctrine, bulwark
to your tide
Of luxury and feasting, pampered
pope.

Alexander VI. Though marks of
sorrow dig into our face,
Disclose what in this world a pope
should help

Perform, in expiation of his sins.

Girolamo S. The ruin of the world.

Alexander VI. What should he
feel?

Girolamo S. Contempt of such a
world.

Alexander VI. What should he
fear?

Girolamo S. The ruin of the
church.

Alexander VI. We will embrace
this doctrine as our guide.

Girolamo S. I choose religion
when beholding woes

And turpitudes reign safely in the
world:

Adulteries, thefts, murders,
heresies,

Obscenities, and violence in a land
That has lost and despair of any
type

Of goodness and serenity in life.

Giuliano. On herbs of grief, pour
comfort's soothing oil.

Alexander VI. We sat like guilt
enthroned, but now must bend
To cram our vulture head with
carrion sins.

Girolamo S. How joyful is the man
who lives by thefts

And murders as he wishes!
Honored must

He be. Let him despoil the widow,
heave

Her children in a dungheap. How
else must

It be for Italy, where vice can
dance

And triumph while bare virtue
sleeps ashamed?

Giuliano. Savonarola utters truths:
church-gains

Are won by locusts swarming on
the cross,

Who feed the safer on the
topmost beam.

Cesare. Ho, Giuliano, could a
man's eyes sink

Into his bosom- ho, if they but
could-

They would behold no treasure of
content,

But dragon cynics eating their
own flesh

With rage in guarding what they
long to spend.

Girolamo S. O, people without
nose, approving still

The libertine, who recompenses
men

Of poorest merit with their very
filth!

Alexander VI. Let us on jagged
glass with naked feet

Trudge onward, and not safely sit
on sin.

Girolamo S. Blind world! Whom do
we greet but bad men who

Win honor without fail? And when
one more

Becomes as you are, what great
feasts in Rome!

An exultation, when you should
renounce,
Shed a round tear, abandon for all
time

Keen appetites of woe, the
downward steps
To pagan halls of dark pre-
eminence.

Alexander VI. Ah, preacher of the
desperate, we thank
Your pains. Tell out beads of
forgotten faults.

Giuliano. I should have been a
pope; no shepherd true
Was crowned in triplicate but
simony.

Alexander VI. Ho, Giuliano, we
know your faith well.

A knave's revenge invited Charles
to storm

Great Rome, whose pillage
generated thick

The seeds and nurseries of
citizens

French-Roman in rebellion of their
lord.

Girolamo S. The poorer fare the
worst when greater ones
Tear out each other's pockets
greedily.

Giuliano. You screech aright, kind
vicar of deep hate.

We met in Florence, when the
Medici

Escaped without their shirts from
palaces.

Girolamo S. When I protected our
great baptistery

From a sad traitor's rampage with
the French.

Could Florence hack the olive,
break the wings
Of man's rapacious scarlet heads
of prey!

Cesare. Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

On Navius' whetstone he predicts
our end.

Where are your rapiers and your
coats of mail?

I tell you, priest, such railing, like
a ship

On tides of fortune placed, must
sink below

Our seat of Christendom; none
can displace

The mass of water apt to bulk
your cause.

Alexander VI. Renounce invasion
with the king of France,

Vile preacher, or prepare to moan
condemned.

Girolamo S. Who else can summon
councils to depose?

Alexander VI. A friar prays to rise
from a pope's fall.

Girolamo S. I hear the proud and
subtle whore of Rome,

Who sells Christ's body in
indulgences.

Alexander VI. Can a priest curse
and stand? A place in Rome

Is found for prelates chiding on
their knees.

Girolamo S. I do not seek a
cardinal's red hat

And crozier, but salvation's crown
of blood.

Alexander VI. A fisherman may lug
into his boat

A monster; though you starve,
throw it away.

Girolamo S. Why should Italians
walk to church and pray?

A bell is rung for money to come
in.

Alexander VI. God is here, but
pretends that he is not.

Cesare. True, like an actor putting
on his face

In dressing-rooms, who then
forgets replies

And entrances, so that the tragedy
Advances in a broken dialogue,

Where, now and then, an empty
pause is heard,

As if one spoke who never said
one word.

Alexander VI. Depose a pope? As
when a madman sees

A carcass float to heaven in his
dreams!

Girolamo S. A Jew bears Rome's
tiara and the cross.

Look for a hailstorm of pure
blood on sins

Of potentates, misleading all the
world

To wordly ends. Amend your way
or die.

Repent, or watch head-pieces
drop in pails

With those who love you for their
profit's sake.

We find in feasts of shame bread
and a priest,

Wine and a priest, a pillow and a
priest.

Divest yourself of heavy robes and
hats;

Melt all Rome's gold and glamor,
thrust them to

The poor, don sober habits of our
lord.

Magnificent lice, we adopt against
The parasite a well-swept path to
life.

You can examples of clear life
record

In our apostles' manner: do you
sleep,

Feed, drink, pray on a woman's
cushioned lap?

For shame repent. Is this how
priests prepare

The reign of Christ on earth
against his foes?

Giuliano. The wise reveal their
mind to few or die.

Girolamo S. I once considered
them, and then I heard

A voice in clouds of sorrow,
saying: "Fool,

Accusing thunder is adored
above."

I will not praise the unctuous
moderate.

Exeunt *Girolamo Savonarola* and
Giuliano

Alexander VI. Has any pope stared
under canopies

To hear such piping songs of puny
threats?

Cesare. No, if you suffer these
with patient shrugs,

I am no Borgia and you by no
means

The father fit to occupy God's throne.

Alexander VI. My brain beats in white heat how cruelly

I may avenge myself against this priest.

I will not wipe my mouth in cloths of silk

Until Savonarola hangs with pain,
While he has bones to break and limbs to tear.

Cesare. No doubt you'll find the right way to do wrong.

Alexander VI. I only need to think and then men groan.

Exeunt Pope Alexander VI and Cesare

Act 1. Scene 3. A street in
Florence. 1497

Enter Girolamo Savonarola and Niccolo Machiavelli

Girolamo S. Ha, excommunicated!
And yet a pope with arms is without force
Against an armless soul in wrath aflame.

Niccolo. All men and women are inclined to dreams
And marvels, which religion profits on.

Give any person reasons to believe
What is impossible and still we find
That he or she adores to be deceived.

You are a prophet: very well, but yet

A prophet or a good man can impose

No lasting law unless he carries arms:

Thus Moses was revered obediently

By faith of powers only he could see.

Divine, not civil laws, you will respect.

As proof of this conclusion, you forbore

To scold accusers of those renegates

Who left your church, condemned without appeal

In contravention of our civil laws.

Girolamo S. Our civil laws must be subjected to

Diviner ones, and those they erred against.

Niccolo. Religion dresses perfidy with pomp.

Disdain of laws is always dangerous,

For then we open coats to any blade

Defending justice as he murders us.

But yet the people love you: well; it is

Much wiser to seem good than to be good.

Only the people can be counted on

To strive for common good, for nobles, priests,

And princes fight but in their interest.

Girolamo S. To fight with me, all to religion's interest,

The signiory has partly been achieved.

Niccolo. A government's a woman, never won

With cold deliberation. Having wooed

With violence, better than mere promises

You should obtain: the naked seat itself.

Girolamo S. The signiory hates Rome's debaucheries.

Where lie a pope's contriteness and regret?

Inquiries on his son's death are annulled,

For he knows well the culprit, a bad man

Too near his heart, far from a brother's love.

Niccolo. Against corruption's seat, we hear good news.

His secretary, Flores, writing bulls
With forged papal seals, has been found out

And weeps in unswept cells on prayer-books

And Paul's epistles; tubs of putrid oil

Are swallowed as his water and his bread.

Girolamo S. He calls me scourge of his iniquity.

So must I prove to be to such a pope.

He says he is God's rapier, but is not:

His broken piece of metal and no more.

We must discover powers in the world

Whose will forms councils to depose a pope.

Niccolo. These will no doubt be difficult to find.

Girolamo S. With help from France, a pope may wail and fall.

Niccolo. But yet with cunning friends you may prevent

The Florentine republic to approve

His potent league against the giddy French.

Girolamo S. And that we'll do or die in this attempt.

Niccolo. He loves to rule at will and so do you.

Must Florence be the great world's monastery?

Girolamo S. A model to the world of Christ and saints.

For what is honor to this generation?

To be esteemed is to have gold and filth.

Niccolo. Earth's beauties rise from cribs and kneel in church

For promises to suck and kiss gold's prick.

Girolamo S. Prepare a bonfire of the vanities.

Enter citizens carrying faggots and divers objects

Dice, cards, combs, mirrors, false
 hair, creams, perfumes,
 Indecent books and portraits must
 be brought
 To a rude market to be burnt
 away.
 The world's prize will in broken
 pieces lie,
 Like precious vessels dropped
 from servant hands.
 There will be ruin in your palaces,
 A terrible revenge on carefree
 lives,
 When ruffian Rome must paint her
 cheeks in blood
 In fear of enemies. There will be
 winds
 In dens of saintly thieves and
 scarlet robes
 Will flutter, blasted from rich
 trembling limbs.
 No infidel can live; no happy man
 Is found inside a house that sleeps
 with sin.
Niccolo. Desire of honor never
 quits a life.
 Lust fails, shrunk avarice by love
 lies tamed-
Girolamo S. But not desire for
 fame and turpitude.

Exeunt citizens

Niccolo. You clean pails in foul
 latrines late at night,
 Not in the bright immodest lamp
 of day,
 For that may be interpreted as a
 Coy affectation of the quest for
 fame.

Because of your shows, Alexander
 swears
 To excommunicate all Florence:
 thus,
 Her imports and her exports
 palsied stiff,
 Black economic night and
 isolation
 May be the comfortless lot of us
 all.
 Six of nine members of the
 signiory
 But feign to frown on your worst
 enemy
 In hope of spurring him to further
 spite.
 Marcus Valerius' crow with
 fiercest beak
 Upon his helmet threatening the
 Gauls
 Must be our help against the
 Roman horde.
 Thus Capitoline, preserving Rome
 On the Tarpeian rock, was pushed
 from it;
 Thus Marcus Curtius, in his fear of
 death
 With his horse threw himself into
 a pit
 But to prevent more earthquakes,
 placating
 The gods who maybe meant no
 further harm.
Girolamo S. I plead for
 reformation. Councils bold
 Must be created, yet for these a
 church
 Is needed, and our church lacks
 prelates: where

Can one discover prelates bold
and true?

We need reformers, but- O spite
of hell!-

Our own reformers need
reformers.

Niccolo. Some merchants of our
city in Rome's cells

Are threatened with the
confiscation of

Their goods, arrested in Saint
Angelo.

To save their wares, will you yet
please a pope?

Girolamo S. To help our citizens
in their despair,

I will stay quiet for one day at
least.

Exeunt Girolamo Savonarola and
Niccolo

Act 1. Scene 4. The Vatican in
Rome. 1497

Enter Pope Alexander VI and
Cesare Borgia

Cesare. For me, in robes of state,
the cardinals

Of our most sacred college
standing stiff!

All popes and princes should like
actors lie,

And actors play like princes;
otherwise,

Views of the great world's
playscript sink obscured.

Alexander VI. Cesare has received
but not deserved

Such honors after his return from
Spain.

Cesare. Why not?

How may I be redeemed back to
your grace?

Alexander VI. Son, that cannot be
known to anyone.

Cesare. You frown. A son may
help. Who worries you?

Alexander VI. Giovanni, martial
head in Naples' pay,

But whom Milan neglects like a
loose shirt.

Cesare. Too true, his cousin,
Ludovic the Moor.

Alexander VI. Duke Ludovic and
Cardinal Ascanio

Ignore my son-in-law. And more
than this

Ascanio loathes me for his servant
lost,

Hanged without pity for revealing
truths,

For calling Juan a pope's bastard
son.

Cesare. Enraged at the mere loss
of paltry grooms?

Alexander VI. Milan, friend to
reproachful France, who beards

Our face, encouraged by the
frantic priest.

Cesare. And sends no money.

Alexander VI. Milan, whom once
we hoped to sway and win.

Cesare. And sends no money.

Alexander VI. Milan, no family but
burdensome.

Cesare. And sends no money.

Alexander VI. Giovanni comes
today to speak with us,

But let us entertain the time with love.

Cesare. Well should church leaders serve as priests of love.

Alexander VI. Why must hypocrisy be always shamed

Of his creative limb? Mere ignorance

Of self pronounces as obscenities

The glory of the world and pleasure's aim.

Men foully hide what most should be adored.

With poets' pageantries, in fear of priests,

A nothingness is idly glorified,

Chaste and immaculate virginity,

That foolish death's-head of the life in life.

I have devised a chapel fit for love,

Our mother Venus with the god of wine,

Their son, Priapus, in a fair ring set,

The holy family, all three unchaste,

For worship. As meek votaries of lust,

We offer tokens of our adoration.

Raise our blessed emblem to the topmost pole.

Cesare. In good faith, men should wear this on their caps,

Or pendant as a neckpiece with some pride.

(Naked men and women are revealed, kneeling before the altar

and images of Bacchus, Venus, and Priapus

Alexander VI. Devotion as the world should practice it!

Cesare. Here those who kneel can be rewarded well

In their own life-time, not in dreams of priests.

Alexander VI. Behold a pope do as parishioners

Who wanton till their haunches cry in pain.

Cesare. Hold till this night. Giovanni comes in haste.

Alexander VI. Detested promptitude of worried minds!

(Cesare draws the curtain

Enter Giovanni Sforza

Giovanni. I have received bad news of fearful scope,

The certitude of a false pope's disdain.

Alexander VI. Soft bean-pole, who dares to upbraid our faith?

Giovanni. Lucrezia's honor creeps beneath your cloak,

Apostolic in nothing but in show.

Alexander VI. Hah, as a nothing henceforth we count you.

Count, you have idly played beside the cunt

And lost the dear account of what is yours,

The debits and the credits of her sex.

To ease her lust, our daughter in
her hand

Bears only hairs of woman, not of
man's,

Or presses empty lemons, which
should yield

The pleasantest of juices to you
both.

Giovanni. I burn and sweat in
shame at these foul words.

Alexander VI. Divorce Lucrezia
now.

Giovanni. No, I refuse. Why should
I push her off?

Cesare. You do not cleave the
circlet with your pin,

You never dip your cake in a
round bowl,

You cannot place your finger in
the pie,

You hold in hand a broom without
the stick,

There is no growing stalk inside
your bush,

And brown bells shake without
the music.

Giovanni. (weeping

You lie again, unholy cardinal.

His tongue's a lamprey's boring at
my heart.

Alexander VI. No? Prove it to our
face. We summon you

To lie like lovers on our bed of
state.

Take our beloved's hand with heat
in yours,

And do with her what pleases
mankind most,

What most would not forgo for
heaven's prize.

Giovanni. I will run mad ere I
submit to such

A deed before a pope and
cardinal.

Alexander VI. You will not,
weakling, therefore you cannot.

Giovanni. Base pope, you kill my
honor and my name.

I will reveal what makes me
tremble but

To whisper sighing in my house
alone:

You clip a daughter on her bed of
shame.

Alexander VI. How, varlet-slave!

Cesare. Cut his vile-speaking
throat.

Alexander VI. Hold, son,
Lucrezia's loving spouse is seized.

Cesare. I seize a traitor to the
Borgia fame.

Giovanni. Ha, funeral urns, ashes,
not men's thoughts,

And Herod filths in place of hearts
of men!

Alexander VI. Let our fair
daughter speak one word with
him.

Enter Lucrezia Borgia, pregnant

Impuissant prune-sack, look to
your wife,

Unhappy at the lack of care
bestowed.

Giovanni. Lucrezia, dearest wife,
say what you wish.

Am I no worthy husband, true and
strong?

Lucrezia. I am your wife in form,
not matter, count.

Giovanni. Faith never bore a
woman's face and heart.

Lucrezia. As with most men, you
are preoccupied

With what a woman does, not
what she thinks.

Defiled in warring vessels, men
expect

A woman as their harbor of soft
peace.

We own no ships, no treasure in
the seas,

Yet live in fear but to secure your
own.

You hope to find in me
subservient stones

Of comfort and regard beneath
your feet,

But rocks cannot love, earth
cannot respect.

What do you wish from me? A
hand for bread,

A voice for songs, a face for
looking sweet.

I was told what a husband should
perform

By Sister Filldebreach from
Austria's church,

But that, you know, was never
promised me.

Giovanni. Ah, will you with
strange impudence suscribe
To infamy and shame, both yours
and mine?

Lucrezia. Pale ignorance because
of you burns red.

Giovanni. Hear, window without
curtain: innocence

Seduces to worse sinning than a
whore.

Pot badly closed, do you deny my
might?

Lucrezia. A mighty tongue in
mouth but not below.

Giovanni. Loose spigot, do you
leer? These knuckles itch.

Lucrezia. Divorce a woman with
no sense of love.

Giovanni. For shame retract at
once this wish of yours.

Lucrezia. I am a Borgia: that's
your answer, lord.

Giovanni. I seek to mend loose
garden gates of lust.

Alexander VI. Her dowry you may
keep if you leave off.

Giovanni. She's neither Magdalen
nor Martha. Thus,

Abandoned by my cousin Ludovic,
I cannot choose but must submit
to you.

Alexander VI. Unhappy marriages
should be revoked.

She is pronounced intact, free
from embrace

Of any man pretending to have
sought

Her concupiscent loves and
honesties.

So may our daughter marry once
again

And with far greater splendor and
delight.

Exit Giovanni

Cesare. Behold a daughter mush
with her fond dad.

Alexander VI. Hide angry blushes
under saint-like cloaks,
Your best security against the
world.

Cesare. Pasiphae bellows for her
scarlet bull.

Exeunt Alexander VI, Lucrezia, and
Cesare

Act 2. Scene 1. The Place of the
Signiory in Florence. 1498

Enter Girolamo Savonarola,
guarded, and Niccolo Machiavelli

Niccolo. The French king's dead
and may not save a priest
Forgotten by his people.
Magistrates
Who loved you best abandon you
to death.

Girolamo S. You see, sir, how it is
with this world's love.
I tried hard to prevent ordeals by
fire,
Dominicans against Franciscans:
foul
Unseemliness in Florence. Cheated
of
Their miracle, the populace
attacked
Our convent of Saint Mark.
Condemned for love
Of wisdom in my quiet
meditations!

Enter citizens with bundles of
faggots

Niccolo. Thus superstition is by
superstition thrown.

Girolamo S. I was strappadoed
forty times at least,
And signed at last admission of
deceit.

Niccolo. The revelation that a
preacher's texts
Were motivated strictly by intent
Of vainglory, in wishing to install
At Florence a republic, Venice-
like.

Girolamo S. Led to be hanged with
rope in view of all
And by the signiory, the name and
place
A deeper shame to them than
mine can be,
With my foul carcass burnt in
effigy!

Exeunt citizens

Niccolo. You do not cheat, unless
religion cheats.

Girolamo S. If I deceive you here,
then Christ deceives.
In misery there is his grace, but
that.

The signiory, in fear of coffers
void,
Worse than their empty, hollow
hearts,
Compacted with a scarlet pope.
Thus I

To lower people should speak
final truths,
For wealthy ears are always
clogged with wads

Of easy money. These rejoice in
dearth

And poverty, the only means of
gain.

Niccolo. The rich will always teach
to be content

With little as the sum of
happiness.

Girolamo S. Lies make the wealthy
man and woman. So,
Should I exhort them to some
pity? No.

Their mass and prayers are a
celebration

Of sleep and comfort. In the
church of old

Stood chalices of wood and
priests of gold;

Where kneel our modern-tinged
parishioners

Stand chalices of gold and priests
of wood.

Niccolo. Whoever speaks the truth
in marketplace

Is persecution's own and that we
see.

Girolamo S. It is a feeble merit to
be good

Among the good. Do not play the
world's way.

What must one do when rounded
still by ill?

What should be done when fierce
misfortunes press?

No citizen dares to help, liking
well

To moon in shadows of their
revenues.

They hope one day to sit beside
their God,

Yet cannot bear to find
uncushioned seats.

Niccolo. Because your heart is
wounded, envious, harsh,

Your God is also wounded,
envious, harsh.

Girolamo S. We trifle with our
only treasure: time.

Exeunt Girolamo Savonarola,
guarded, and Niccolo

Act 2. Scene 2. The Vatican in
Rome. 1498

Enter Pope Alexander VI and
Pantasilia, screaming

Alexander VI. As coy Lucrezia's
servant, you have found

A thousand reasons to be terrified
For flouting such an angry son as
ours.

Enter Cesare Borgia, chasing with
a sword Pedro Caldes

Cesare. Behold Lucrezia's
frightened whoreson love,
Who prances as a lord up to her
bed.

Alexander VI. Hold, son.

Cesare. Perotto, your fair
daughter's instrument

Of vilest pleasure, organ of deceit.

Alexander VI. Will you slay him
before the papal throne?

Cesare. I'll cut him into pieces of
himself.

(Cesare stabs Pedro many times

Alexander VI. Ha! Ha!

See our face scalded in his drops
of blood.

Cesare. And now to Pantasilia I
devote

Some time and place. Come,
woman's secret cloth,

Too faithful servant, come- No?
No?

She loses water; blood she'll lose
anon.

No trull can make a soldier-
prelate blench

With screaming. Loyal Pantasilia,
hear;

You shared a countess' love with
her own man:

Taste sour rewards for lickerish
delights.

(Cesare crushes Pantasilia's face
and throat under his foot

Alexander VI. Well-merited end to
her diligence!

The father of Cesare finds in him
An absolute for vengeance and
redress.

Cesare. Perotto and Lucrezia!
Scissored whore

On both sides of a servant's
sturdy hip!

Is not that thought sufficient to
make you

Run mad with deadly sorrow and
deep shame?

Alexander VI. It is, Cesare.

Cesare. I grieve that I could
murder them but once.

Lucrezia and Perotto! Riggish
tricks

In Rome, thus compromising
marriage-plans

With Aragon and perfect
strategems!

Alexander VI. No doubt our plots
beseem the church of Rome.

Cesare. How may we live? What
goal should be attained?

Alexander VI. To counter smooth
Orsini's counter-plots,

Whom I suspect of striking Juan
off,-

Cesare. No doubt.

Alexander VI. It is our pleasure
that this daughter plight

Her troth to stiff Alfonso, bastard
son

Of Federigo, king of Aragon,

And Sancia's brother. Let the bond
be knit,

The duke of Bisceglie and our
pure girl,

With forty thousand ducats as his
share

Of royal dowry, match-point that
should hurl

The deadliest ball against Rome's
enemies.

Cesare. Agreed.

Alexander VI. Now draw the
curtain on this massacre,

For cardinals arrive to know your
mind.

(Cesare draws the curtain

Enter cardinals

Cesare leaps unprecedented heights

As if they were the common steps of man.

Cesare. Here I divest himself of prelate robes

To reach the shore of France, with your consent,

Grave cardinals, as brave Valencia's duke,

Transformed from a mere county by our sure

Negotiations with the king of France.

Alexander VI. And captain-general of our fair church.

Cesare. I never felt bound to religious life,

Though joyful in indulgences well won

And hesitant to disobey a pope.

I ask you, lords, permission to take off

This unbecoming priestly cloth of lambs,

And wish instead to enter at all costs

Into the present century of man.

Alexander VI. We pray you, worthy cardinals, approve

This wish of his, for Rome's sake and our own.

Cesare. I freely render churches, monasteries,

Ecclesiastic bounties, magnified

Or small, I leapt in joy with seizing still.

Alexander VI. They are amazed. More of this later, son.

Cesare. Some scarlet for my face, not on my clothes!

Alexander VI. Your best way to avoid damnation, son.

Cesare. I now deposit on this very floor

My cardinal's red hat and take up helms

For purposes of more than bloody zeal.

Alexander VI. To feed his prospects to our neighbor France, We seize with open hands the properties

Of Cardinal Campofregoso.

Moreover, we announce that Pedro de Aranda,

False Calahorra, bandit-cardinal,

Converted Jew, has lost the sums he stole

Outrageously against religion's shop,

A chest of twenty thousand ducats, he

And his sad bastard thrown down famished in

Our deepest dungeon of Saint Angelo,

Where may the roof fall on their guilty heads.

We also levy, to aid our dear son,

A special tax against all Jews. Besides,

Two hundred-thirty Spanish Christians, but

Suspected Jews, will be restricted by

A crushing fine, with tax on grains imposed,
And mounting fees for any benefice.

Cesare. We can expect, thanks to these measures, lords,
At least two hundred thousand ducats, fit
To pay one hundred servants, fifty mules,
And twelve large carts of baggage towards France.
Who can object to this and hope to live?

(A cardinal takes up Cesare's hat and gives it to the pope, whispering to him)

Alexander VI. Our newest cardinal, Valencia's prize,
Is Juan Borgia Llançol, our good nephew.

Exeunt Pope Alexander VI, Cesare, and cardinals

Act 2. Scene 3. The Vatican in Rome. 1498

Enter Lucrezia Borgia, dressed as a bride, and Girolamo Mancioni, dressed as a satyr, dancing

Lucrezia. Well should a favored bride leap nimbly forth,
Spring high lavoltas in the yielding air,
With merry bounds cavorting to her bed.

The pleasure starts when we anticipate
From memory the thing we never knew.

Girolamo M. Who would not cheer aloud and strike his heels
At fair Lucrezia's joyous wedding feast?

Lucrezia. A virgin can expect no jollier song
Than what with glory has been heard from you.

Girolamo M. When I consider on this very night
A husband's bliss, a husband's joyful cries,

I barely can walk or stand upright.
Lucrezia. A guest may lift a bride, not throw her down.

Girolamo M. True, that must be the husband's gladsome task.

Lucrezia. Believe this night a husband's keen-edged sword
Will be quite roundly put to a sharp test.

Girolamo M. I almost leak at the mere thought of it.

Enter Cesare Borgia, dressed as a unicorn

Cesare. Why does Lucrezia turn her face away?
Is this no loving brother she beholds?

Lucrezia. A brother's care may overleap the mark.

Cesare. Perotto's dead, but a fine husband lives.

Lucrezia. No doubt.

Cesare. I saw, sir, that you meant to dance with her.

That may be, but a brother leads her forth.

Girolamo M. Cesare takes his place where men avoid.

(Cesare dances with her

Cesare. A gently pensive maiden has the force

To tame with her white hands all unicorns.

Girolamo M. The emblem of love's purity and truth.

Cesare. Believe that husbands in a marriage please.

Lucrezia. The history of your sex promises

But little of the virtues sworn to us.

Cesare. We must wait seven years at least until

The apple-tree produces goodly fruit.

Lucrezia. How, seven years with finger in the eye,

Or in a lower place, amort with woe?

Cesare. We pluck ripe apples with a gentle turn,

Not with a brutish pull, when we expect

To reap contentedly next year's full crop.

Lucrezia. Lucrezia Borgia must be satisfied,

And Sancia's brother is the likely goad

To prick her oxen forth on sumptuous grass.

Cesare. Now, Girolamo, have you tasted yet

Our marriage banquet?

Girolamo M. Egg-soup, carp, oyster, caviar, scallop, pike, Trout, winkle, sturgeon, tuna, capers, ray,

Eel, pot of noodles, ravioli, led

By olive, endive, lettuce, carrot, leeks,

Anchovies, radish, garlic, onion peal,

Red cabbage drenched in wine and vinegar,

Herb omelet, black-pudding, furnished well

With marzipan and arrowroot tart, topped

By orange, apple, pomegranate, and peach!

Even lemon-scented toothpicks are devoured.

Exit Girolamo Mancioni

Cesare. From table party to the curtained one,

The pope performs as well as younger men.

Lucrezia. On my own sheets, I often see him sweat.

Cesare. A father can be murdered for that trick.

Lucrezia. No, never think of that.

Cesare. I never think I will, for, as a man,

He can beget more weight in gold than sons.

Lucrezia. I saw Cesare kill six bulls today.

Cesare. But not the broadest in the Roman stall.

Lucrezia. Cesare may not, should he hope to live.

Cesare. Come, never fear. Cesare loves you well.

(kissing her on the lips)

Lucrezia. Ah, pah! Puh, puh!

Cesare. Why do you spit? Pure drops I offer you.

Lucrezia. Such kisses on a husband's will depend.

Cesare. In annals written on love's happiness,

A woman's beauty is of lesser pith
Than kindness: should we not be
there inscribed?

Lucrezia. In annals written on love's happiness,

A manly boldness is of lesser pith
Than kindness: may I wed as
others do?

Cesare. While maiming those town
bulls, I mused today

On my new motto: "Ceasar, or else
nothing."

Enter Alfonso of Aragon

Alfonso A. Will you now come
inside?

Exeunt Cesare, Lucrezia, and
Alfonso of Aragon

Act 2. Scene 4. The Vatican in
Rome. 1498

Enter Michele da Corella and
Francesco Gonzaga

Michele. I saw Cesare clasp with
eager hands

Louis de Villeneuve in his coat of
blue,

The baron of Trans and
ambassador

Of France in Rome, with whom he
left in haste.

Francesco. Fraught with the papal
bull annulling aye

Louis the Twelfth's unhappy
marriage with

Queen Jeanne, deformed and ill-
matched daughter of

King Louis the Eleventh. With
Charles' death,

Louis the Twelfth proclaims
himself the king of France

And Naples, brooks no more an
ugly wife,

But savors modest Anne of
Brittany,

The widow of the former king. At
first

She gasped in disbelief, rebuking
him:

"Once I was queen, and now a
king's best whore,"

Moaned she. The bolder king
could comfort her

But with this promise: "If we yield
consent

To fair Lucrezia's marriage, then
the pope

Will for all times bless ours, my
pretty Anne."

I saw Cesare dance with Carlotta

Of Aragon, a daughter of the king
 And the queen's maid of honor.
 Striking him,
 Thus did she weep aloud: "I will
 not be called
 Before the world a woman-
 cardinal."

Michele. Cesare's letter to my
 house confirms
 That, scorning this court-buffet,
 in a week
 He courted, swore deep oaths of
 love, assailed,
 And married Charlotte d'Albret,
 sister to
 Navarre's king. On his stout
 marriage bed,
 He broke eight lances: two before
 he ate
 A hearty supper and six more at
 night.

Francesco. He will return to Rome
 with a French host.

Michele. Well pleased with
 Cardinal Della Rovere
 In Avignon, who from his hands
 received
 Sequestered goods and Ostia's
 citadel.

I go to greet Cesare at Milan,
 Where you will see brave deeds
 and terrible.

Exit Michele and enter Alfonso of
 Aragon

Alfonso A. Cesare with the French
 may form a league
 In Naples. Is this well, Francesco,
 ha?

Francesco. I cannot say what this
 might mean to you.

Alfonso A. My family may murder
 me, and soon.

I fly to Naples with two servants'
 help.

Francesco. Without your wife? Ha!
 Is this wise, my lord?

Alfonso A. My house is pregnant
 with a bellyful

Of deadly dangers. I fear much the
 duke.

Exit Alfonso of Aragon and enter
 Pope Alexander VI

Francesco. To Naples faint Alfonso
 flies in fear.

Alexander VI. Ha, Naples! There
 will cunning Sancia go,

Who hotly urged him to this deed
 of shame.

Re-enter Michele da Corella

Michele. I seized Alfonso in his
 coach. He meant-

Alexander VI. To hurry from the
 Vatican, but why?

Michele. He was persuaded to
 return with me,

But in the greatest fearfulness of
 mind.

I do not know the reason for these
 freaks.

Exit Michele and enter Lucrezia
 Borgia

Alexander VI. Love always governs
woman's happy face,
But fortunate Lucrezia must do
more

Than sigh on couches. Learn from
us amazed

You are appointed as our
governess

Of fortresses mere men cannot
contain:

Spoletto and Foligno, yours to rule.

Lucrezia. Ha!

Alexander VI. Are these no boons?
Some fools may grieve or laugh
At your advancement, on your sex
cast doubts.

Why should a woman be
constrained? No post

Is too exalted for our daughter's
scope-

No, not if she became one day a
pope.

Lucrezia. At your strong fortress,
always think of me

As both the jailer and the
prisoner.

Exeunt Pope Alexander VI and
Lucrezia

Act 2. Scene 5. The duke's palace
in Milan. 1499

Enter Cesare Borgia and Michele
da Corella

Cesare. Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

Michele. Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

Cesare. The French now fight with
papal armaments,

Much to Milan's distaste, where
widows eat

Cold suppers on loved one's
abandoned plates.

Michele. I saw Duke Ludovico and
Ascanio

Leap from their windows in their
servant's shirts,

With hairy legs befuzzed on
burnt-out grass.

Cesare. With d'Aubigny,
Chaumont, Amboise, and all,

I enter regally in triumph, bound
In oak-leaves like Rome's
conquerors of old.

Michele. Milan is now Cesare's
papal state.

Cesare. Which all Romagna tyrants
grieve to hear.

Michele. When such a sudden
troop of warriors march,
What then cannot be done in
Italy?

Cesare. Rule, Ceasar, or let
nothing grow anew.

Exeunt Cesare and Michele

Act 2. Scene 6. The fortress at
Spoletto. 1499

Enter Lucrezia Borgia and Alfonso
of Aragon

Lucrezia. At last Alfonso
handsomely reclines

Into his wife's arms at Spoletto's
walls.

Alfonso A. I do, thanks to an
angry brother's zeal.

He warned me to return to you at once,

Though I tried to defend from the French king

Despairing Naples. What lean times are these!

Now Aragon awaits until the French

Scrape off some bony morsel from his plate,

His territory theirs, the strangers', theirs.

Lucrezia. With hapless Giofre as her only stay,

A duchess moans aloud for her beloved.

Alfonso A. The wily pope abandons Aragon,

But offers Nepi to slake half my thirst.

Lucrezia. Do as he wishes, if you value peace.

Enter Pope Alexander VI

Alexander VI. Giacomo Caetini's old properties

Are seized as newest traitor to the state.

Rejoice, Alfonso; his loss is your gain.

Read here his havings and expenditures.

Alfonso A. Ha, eighty thousand ducats!

Alexander VI. Yours.

Exit Pope Alexander VI

Alfonso A. A man is made and in an hour unmade.

Lucrezia. The pope declares Romagna lords' behests

Caress the ear like children's babbling cries

At war in playgrounds. Forli's towered bell,

Imola's castled rock with halberds spiked,

Faenza's faience stored in the town hall,

Rimini by Tiberius' unwon bridge:

All quake in fear before Cesare's host

Of spare Italian mercenaries,

Who heed no grandfather's loud toothless cries,

No child a-wailing in his parent's bed

Alone at night when all the rest are dead,

With forces of the French led by d'Alègre

And Antoine de Baissey, an army puffed,

With fifteen thousand soldiers swollen stiff.

Alfonso A. Pesaro trembles to be opened wide;

Urbino tears out sweaty veil and dress,

With fists in mouth bemused at thoughts of death.

Lucrezia. Expect brief wars. This brother should cure most

Italian ills with desperate attempts.

Exeunt Lucrezia and Alfonso of Aragon

Act 2. Scene 7. The Vatican in Rome. 1499

Enter Cesare Borgia and Michele da Corella

Cesare. Ha, cribbed and babied! She had one before, Who thrives, but whose it is we are to learn.-

A brother's martyred blood!- Does the brat live?

Michele. He does. A boy, I think.

Cesare. The husband's handsomer- how was this not Thought on? The father is no soldier, ha!

Michele. But yet beloved by her.

Cesare. My musings like hot pincers burn black flesh Long-wearied by forgetful torturers,

Abandoned on a wall, too faint to groan,

Much doubting my release from woman's sway,

When men cannot yet dream to hold me down.

He is Apollo, I, like Marsyas, Lose war of flutes and smile when flayed alive.

Michele. She comes, my lord.

Enter Lucrezia Borgia with her baby and exit Michele

Lucrezia. Cesare's tread heard in the Vatican!

Cesare. I hurry to consult a prudent pope Before my first campaign in the Romagna.

Lucrezia. A mother proudly shows her son to all, Our blessed Rodrigo, king of infants small.

Cesare. Pish, a light bairn! I'm glad my sister's well.

Lucrezia. We hear you mean to shake all Italy.

Cesare. With vehemence of soul burn half the chaff.

Lucrezia. But not, I pray, against my father-in-law's house.

Cesare. Still have I not forgotten Aragon.

Did he not flash white teeth disdainfully

On pleas for falsest fair Carlotta's hand?

Lucrezia. You hold another.

Cesare. King Louis wishes to obtain the state Of Naples and his wishes are my own.

Lucrezia. Where do you hasten?

Cesare. I will hit proud Imola and her towns,

Defended by a virile woman's will, A Caterina Sforza who bound up And cruelly put to death with slow knives

Two dark assassins of two husbands' loves.

For snorting in contempt at Rome's command,

That female rebel will be chastised well.

Lucrezia. For all the taunts thrown on Valencia's duke,

The countess must abandon Forli walls.

Cesare. When that man-woman hears our steps, watch for Her menstous cloth to pop out in deep fear.

Lucrezia. Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

Cesare. She'll skip without her skirt, I promise you.

Lucrezia. Were I a man, I would be ever yours.

Cesare. No, as a woman I would have you mine.

Lucrezia. Leave off, kind brother.

Cesare. Where is my father? With his feathers rise

The reborn Roman eagle fit to reign.

Scaevola's hand in fire before his foes

Was not more certain-sure and resolute.

Exeunt Cesare and Lucrezia

Act 3. Scene 1. The Vatican in Rome. 1500

Enter Pope Alexander VI and Michele da Corella

Alexander VI. Cesare conquers as he walks and eats.

Michele. And couples. Forli and Imola gates

Lie open like two maidens in the night.

Alexander VI. A loud triumphant entry into Rome

For a pope's son with his spent army fleshed!

Ha! He deserves a civic crown of oak.

Michele. At best a myrtle crown for fighting well

Some puny enemies against the state.

Alexander VI. A laurel one at least for greater ones.

Michele. His heart is marvellously lifted high,

Helped by Alfonso, who well seconds him,

And Vitellozzo Vitelli with his troops.

Alexander VI. We are surprised Alfonso follows him.

Michele. He is more frightened of Cesare's frown

Than a foe's rapier's point. What news in Rome?

Speak low: who did you kill this week?

Alexander VI. We killed- Ha, ha, the name's forgottten.

Michele. A tedious query. Pope and son seem like

The hemlock: root and fruit both poisonous.

Alexander VI. The Eucharistic wine may sour, not blood,

Which ripens to advantage of the state.

Enter Cesare Borgia

Here is a son exactly as a man
May wish for, though he thinks he
dreams or dotes.

Cesare. With a full theater's
applause and thanks
To our tragedian writing in men's
blood,
From which derive our power and
resource.

Alexander VI. Henceforth, a
bastard should be recognized
In calendars of saints. The grafted
plant
Is worthier than the stock, more
wholesome, fresh,
Refulgent, to man's troubled
senses ripe.

Cesare. A sapling grows wherever
seed and earth-
Michele as the soil- can promise
much.

Michele. I'm the manure that
nurtures your high worth.

Alexander VI. Reveal in full to our
astonished ears
How Forli withers, how Imola
shrinks.

Cesare. I grappled long with
Caterina Sforza at
Bestrewn and mangled Forli.
Though her troupes
Were beaten back and in dark
kennels hid
From our bright swords, though
streets in childhood known
Lay like the body of a stranger,
pierced
And bleeding copiously, not to be
helped,

She fought us like a female
Hercules,
Exchanged her distaff for a
soldier's pike,
Exploded her reserves of powder
when
We rushed to capture her, which
nearly dashed
Our forces. Beaten down with
little harm,
We load her body like a bending
"L"

So heavily with baggage of bull's
meat,
That she seems pregnant from the
front and back.

Alexander VI. You do not strike,
we hope, a face which once
Worse than a cannon smoked with
words of spite.

Cesare. I do. That more-than-
manly woman is
Less than a woman now. To her
eight holes

I added a few more of bloody
note,
Abusing her to such a low degree
That satin-puffed French libertines
stare hard

And stagger scandalized with hat
in hand
Demanding her release. But I hold
still

My captive lioness, with sorrows
fed,
Not with our victuals, which she
scorns to nose.

Alexander VI. Safe to Saint Angelo
let her be bound.

As general of our triumphant
church
You are appointed, fleshed in
honor's stamp,
And may the sun strike terrible
plague-spots
On any tyrant daring to oppose
The Borgia will.

Exit Pope Alexander VI

Cesare. Alfonso dies, Miguel.
Michele. I can do it with stealth.
Cesare. Where is the loon?
Michele. Upon his knees inside
Saint Peter's church.
Cesare. Here is my dagger.
Michele. I need no sharper one.
Cesare. Are you attended?
Michele. Two trustworthy
assassins pray with him.
Cesare. Remove Lucrezia from
that horrid sight.
Michele. She comes pat as we
wish.

Exit Michele and enter Lucrezia
Borgia

Lucrezia. A brother shining
brightly in men's blood!
Cesare. Ho, sister, you speak well
and to the point.
Lucrezia. My brother's dagger has
a sharper one.
Cesare. True, true.
Lucrezia. Where is it?- Lost? When
will you ride again?
Cesare. Giovanni Sforza's weeds of
deep revolt

Grow to our knees.

Lucrezia. My former husband to
be cut by you!

Cesare. A husband never to be
found again
By man or beast.

Re-enter Michele da Corella with
attendants, bearing Alfonso,
bloody

Lucrezia. Ha!

Cesare. Ah, what a world is this!
Alfonso stabbed?

Michele. Before the altar as he
gazed above.

Cesare. My captain bleeding fresh
on head and back!

Lucrezia. Ah, no! I seem to see for
greater woe

A traitor's dagger sticking on his
flesh.

Cesare. She faints.

Michele. A moment only. See, see,
she revives.

Lucrezia. Speak. Is my husband
dead?

Michele. No.

Cesare. Why not?

Michele. A tiger tore the throats
of his two friends.

Cesare. Bear off our honored
captain to his bed.

Exeunt attendants bearing Alfonso

Each slice of meat by you should
be prepared,
For we fear more attempts against
his life

With dreaded poisons or by other means.

Lucrezia. I'll follow your advice.
Kind brother's care!

Cesare's wish is rarely dismissed.

Exit Lucrezia

Cesare. Come, will you languish
for a slight mishap?

An apple left at dinner may be
chewed

At supper leisurely. My second
soul,

My thought in execution, stand
prepared

To serve Cesare in his newest
post:

Physician to the injured, luckless
spouse.

Exeunt Cesare and Michele

Act 3. Scene 2. The Vatican in
Rome. 1500

Enter Lucrezia Borgia and
Francesco Gonzaga

Lucrezia. You must in my worst
torments seem a friend.

Francesco. Fair duchess, I have
sworn fidelity
To father, son, and daughter till I
die.

Lucrezia. Ah, it is possible that
kindness to

The sister will not please a
brother's mood.

Francesco. How!

Lucrezia. Do I hear knocking at
the door, or are

These sounds loud heart-beats
drumming in my ears?

Francesco. No, no, the night is
deep and quiet still.

Lucrezia. Make sure no fly comes
near Alfonso's bed.

Exit Francesco; Alphonso of
Aragon is revealed in bed

Alfonso A. Am I-

Lucrezia. Quite safe. The pope
declares that any man

Or woman entering the Vatican
With sword on hip or dagger
folded up

Is certain to be miserably put
To death in dungeons of Saint
Angelo.

Alfonso A. A kinder father than I
ever knew.

And yet I fear-

Lucrezia. Who?

Alfonso A. Your brother.

Lucrezia. Ha! Why?

Alfonso A. As I knelt praying in
the church, I thought-

No matter.

Lucrezia. Who stabbed you?

Alfonso A. Friends.

Lucrezia. Friends of Miguel as
well?

Alfonso A. I fear so.

Lucrezia. O, no! No, no, no, no.

Alfonso A. Let no wasp enter in a
sick man's room:

Cesare may bait poisons on the
dart.

Lucrezia. Heart tremors in my throat! Whom may we trust?

Alfonso A. I should escape at once.

Lucrezia. You see how at each side blood streams afresh.

Alfonso A. Ah, pains, the sharpest man can ever know!

Lucrezia. Lost in a sea of worries, baffled, dumb,

When my Cesare should be sail and mast.

Alfonso A. His very name makes me rave and spit blood,

Yet I'm unsure how I should leave my room.

Lucrezia. Rest still. I hear footsteps outside the door.

Alfonso A. Unfriendly ones, I fear.

Enter Michele da Corella

Michele. Kind duchess, a good brother asks for you.

Lucrezia. Tell him I'll never leave my husband's side.

Michele. You know his choler. This may not, I hear, Brook any kind of murmur and delay.

Alfonso A. We dare not anger him, Lucrezia. Go.

Exit Lucrezia

Michele. How does Alfonso fare?

Alfonso A. O, very faint and quiet.

Michele. I'll make you quieter. I hold in hand

Prescriptions sure to make you better still.

Alfonso A. The cuttlefish escapes his enemies

In clouds of ink and then finds out his prey

To strangle him.

Enter Cesare Borgia, disguised as a physician

Michele. Greet joyfully your new physician.

Alfonso A. Death's my physician.

Cesare. Ha, do not tremble, sir. All should be well.

Alfonso A. Who are you?

Cesare. I come, sir, to examine your disease,

And rid you of it if I can.

Michele. Our life is a disease.

Alfonso A. Where did you study?

Cesare. I learned my sciences on battle-fields.

Alfonso A. Ah, ah, you hurt me.

Cesare. We call these auscultations, troubled sir, If I remember well my student notes.

Alfonso A. Say: will your patient live?

Cesare. The diagnosis seems to me quite bleak.

Alfonso A. I see the crocodile, with nostrils, eyes, And ears above the horrid brackish stream.

(Cesare removes his disguise

Cesare. Now, Michelotto, calm his worried mind.

(Michele strangles Alfonso)

Achieved with diligence!

Exit Michele and re-enter Lucrezia Borgia

My sister, hear from me the worst of news.

Lucrezia. Dead!

Cesare. Quite dead.

Lucrezia. Ah, ah! Ah, ah!

Cesare. A pitiful case certainly.

(Cesare draws the bed-curtain)

Lucrezia. I may not bear this deadly deathful grief.

Cesare. A husband quite unworthy of your love.

Lucrezia. Away, false brother!

Cesare. I'm falling; to a sister's open charms

A man can easily yield, though blamed by some.

Lucrezia. Unhand a frenzied widow, not your love.

Cesare. A sister doubtless, but a woman, too.

Lucrezia. Ah, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

A yielding sister may be found no more.

Exit Lucrezia

Cesare. Not? Not?

Exit Cesare

Act 3. Scene 3. The fortress of Cesena. 1500

Enter Michele da Corella and Vitellozzo Vitelli

Michele. Say, Vitellozzo, how fare our assaults?

Vitellozzo. Where we appear stout soldiers bow and faint.

In Rome's campaign against Romagna towns,

Our seven thousand hardy men-at-arms,

In fiercest trim and smiling blood-stained face,

With twenty-one charged cannons aimed aright,

Fight off twelve thousand images of fear,

Italian, French, and Spanish, men no more.

Gian Paolo Baglioni, wounded, pale,

Dishevelled in affrighted ranks, turns to

The shaggy Paolo Orsini, bear

Pursued by hunters, as he limps away.

Michele. Cesare sends me word he has repulsed

Twice-beaten Ludovico, the pale Moor,

Duke of Milan, at burnt Novara fields.

Unlucky Ludovico in Touraine,

Ascanio in Bourges, groan in
prison gyves.

Have you heard of Giovanni
Sforza's troupes?

Vitellozzo. Giovanni Sforza's
troups lie massacred.

He from Pesaro towards Mantua
flees

With codpiece loose and unused
sword unbreeched.

Enter Francesco Gonzaga

Michele. Here's Mantua's marquis
who can beat it down.

Francesco Gonzaga skips in
hurried haste,

No doubt to lift our hearts with
tales like gusts

Of mayhem blown against Rome's
enemies.

Francesco. I chased Pandolfo
Malatesta's host

Through awful breaches in
Rimini's fort.

Michele. O brave Francesco! How,
Rimini pierced

And ravished by your column full
upright?

Vitellozzo. Gonzaga rises and all
foemen fall.

Michele. Some women, too.

Vitellozzo. I have seen him
perform in fields of blood

What common soldiers cannot
dream they may.

Michele. He crushes raisins dry
with the same ease.

Francesco. You have received
promotions, worthy sir.

Vitellozzo. Complete command of
our artillery.

Enter Cesare Borgia

Cesare. My captains, welcome to
Cesena's heights.

Are all tasks done? Our swords
lack men to hack.

Vitellozzo. Some remnants of
them stay to bury friends.

Michele. What of Faenza?

Cesare. We are unable at the
moment to

Make puddles of Faenza, but we
will.

To push some further way into the
rift

Of tyrants' hollow hearts, I'll
pluck more gold

Meant for crusades against the
blameless Turk,

By simony create twelve cardinals,
With which amount I'll hire

enemies:

Gian Paolo Baglioni, Giulio and
Paolo Orsini,

Oliverotto da Fermo, for our use.

Michele, Vitellozzo, hurry to

Faenza, where fond mothers now
should weep,

To think that they no more will
mothers be.

Exeunt Michele and Vitellozzo

Now for some gentler
entertainment, sir.

Have you secured, as I
commanded you,

Giovanni Caracciolo's lightsome wife?

Francesco. Pale Dorotea from her man-tossed coach

Was taken out before her husband knew

You meant to wrap her in a soldier's cloak,

A Dorotea waiting in cold fear
To bed tonight with her hot languisher.

Exeunt Cesare and Francesco

Act 3. Scene 4. A military camp
before Faenza. 1500

Enter Michele da Corella and Vitellozzo Vitelli

Vitellozzo. Bartolomeo Grammante may well prove
To be the traitor to Faenza's hopes.

Michele. I think he will.

Vitellozzo. Cesare wishes to preserve our troops.

Michele. Then traitors must be kissed.

Enter Cesare Borgia

Cesare. Sirs, is Faenza yet achieved as planned?

Michele. Not yet.

Vitellozzo. Bartolomeo Grammante may well prove-

Cesare. Go see it done.

Exit Vitellozzo

Greet with loud gladness my new engineer
Of armed fortifications.

Enter Leonardo da Vinci

Michele. Is it not Leonardo?

Leonardo. Yes, Leonardo da Vinci, as it please

Cesare and his conquest-loving hosts

To make good use of my abilities,
Untried as yet in matters of great war.

Cesare. His former patron, Ludovic the Moor,

Sweeps with a wet nose ugly prison floors.

Leonardo. I can assure fortifications with
A flow of water to the city streams.

Cesare. That. Please me well. I recommend you do.

Re-enter Vitellozzo Vitelli

Vitellozzo. Bartolomeo Grammante's answer is

That citizens have few provisions left.

Cesare. O, fortunate event! Besiege the town,

And thank that traitor for his happy news

With a sharp rapier's point before his friends.

Exeunt Michele and Vitellozzo

I hate a traitor.

Leonardo. Will it please your kind grace to read my plans?

Cesare. Assuredly. But Leonardo may

Be of some use in love as well as war.

Leonardo. Love of a woman? I spend little time

On that, preferring much the love of man.

Cesare. How may the unicorn his loved one win?

Leonardo. The unicorn, through mad intemperance,

Not knowing how to bridle waywardness,

For the great love he bears to maidens fair

Forgoes ferocity and wildness. Thus,

Repulsing any fear, he softly rears
On seated damsels to sleep on their lap.

And then the hunter in the hedge takes it.

Exeunt Cesare and Leonardo

Act 3. Scene 5. The fortress at
Nepi. 1501

Enter Lucrezia Borgia bearing sheets of paper and Francesco Gonzaga

Lucrezia. These men are pricked for death, and those for life.

Francesco. No possible reprieve?

Lucrezia. No, men are much to blame for killing men.

Francesco. For killing thieves as poor as they, thieves hang.

Lucrezia. How else should great ones thrive? For poverty

We raise a judge's bench, we burnish church,

As priest and lawyer of prosperity.

Enter Cesare Borgia

Cesare. The pope names me duke of Romagna towns.

Francesco. When will Duke Valentino raid again?

Cesare. Rush to the Vatican and there await

The coming of a newer kind of man.

Exit Francesco

There are more plots afoot than you dream of.

Lucrezia. Another worthy husband meant for me?

May I keep this one for a year at least?

Cesare. You are disposed to jest. Your new love is

Alfonso d'Este, timid son and heir
Of Duke Ercole of Ferrara, charged

To pay the husband's part with interest,

Ferrara, in position of attack

Against proud Venice and confederates.

Lucrezia. Well.

Cesare. Not overjoyed?

Lucrezia. In mourning cloths I eat
from earthenware,
Not silver, as a Borgia matron
should.

Cesare. From an unhappy widow
to a bride.

Lucrezia. A bride I seem to you,
unhappily.

Cesare. Is it not seemly that a
layman lie
With you more often than a pope?
Are you

A woman or an aspen leaf, who
shakes

And trembles at each trifling
breath of sin?

Lucrezia. Then to Ferrara with a
shepherd's pipe,

Where poets dream in shadows far
away,

A fortunate occasion for release
From bonds of father's and of
brother's loves.

Exeunt Cesare and Lucrezia

Act 3. Scene 6. The Vatican in
Rome. 1501

Enter Michele da Corella and
Francesco Gonzago

Francesco. The pact between King
Louis, styled the lord
Of Naples, and Fernando, king of
Spain
And duke of Puglia and Calabria,
Is cheerfully approved by the glad
pope.

Michele. King Federigo is deposed,
they say,

For dark collusions with the wily
Turk

After the massacre at Capua,
where

Rome with ambitious France
conspired to shake

The rotted fruit to ground.

Francesco. As Federigo's allies in
past wars,

Colonna's coffers are depleted by
the pope.

Michele. He needs more money
for Cesare's aims.

For what strange reason I may
never guess,

But Duke Ercole of Ferrara sought
To shun the wealthy marriage
entertained

For him between Lucrezia and his
son,

Begged Louis' help-

Francesco. Well counteracted by
some letters sent

From Alexander to the king of
France.

Lucrezia marries a reluctant man
By proxy with her brother looking
on.

Michele. Let us prepare diversions
for the pope

By spreading roasted chestnuts on
this floor.

Exeunt Michele and Francesco,
enter Pope Alexander VI and
Girolamo Mancioni

Girolamo M. Inside a room where
chastity must mourn,
Expect loud orgies never seen by
Turks,

A feast with fifty heady
prostitutes.

Alexander VI. A silken mantle to
the lord who shoots
The oftenest to our admiring
sight!

Girolamo M. We offer you a
chestnut supper on
The eve of All Saints' day.

Alexander VI. Why chestnuts?

Girolamo M. Fair men and women,
in a short attire
And naked underneath, will bend
for these,

Exposing to each guest's
astonished view
The engines that will work and
play for you.

Enter men and women in short
tunics, who bend over in pairs
while picking up the chestnuts

Alexander VI. No, hold awhile.
This must our daughter see.

Enter Lucrezia Borgia

Our ripest time! Sit by our side
and frown
Whenever games dull a bride's
appetite.

Lucrezia. O, lord, here hangs the
bulkiest one-holed flute
A woman's mouth may learn to
play upon.

Alexander VI. Such flutes are
played with fingers underneath.

Lucrezia. But not so large as to
exceed bed-length.

Alexander VI. No doubt we'll see
this farmer stick his knife
In her red onion.

Lucrezia. That man's well
mounted: I saw him at his farm
With sheeps and goats for
practice. He digs wells.

Cut off the members of each man
condemned

To hang on bloody gallows for a
month

And let her finger those, should
she refuse.

Alexander VI. The daintiest dog
cannot another greet
Without first placing nose to arse.

Lucrezia. Inverted mushroom
longing to be picked!

Alexander VI. She has a pair on
her that can inspire

An adolescent's fingers to dig out
The swollen toadstool from his
breeches, though

His mother's eyes pry on the
insolence.

What dying man in winter would
not sigh

But to behold such beauty cough
and sneeze?

Lucrezia. Now for the main bout.
O, marvels, O!

Our pleasure's at least doubled
with two men,
And so I cannot blame that
woman's trick;

She holds some flax without her distaff, yet
 She may spin wool from off his curly head.

Alexander VI. Grey hairs invigurate the fair and black.-

Do you note all outpourings of the day?

Girolamo M. I do. There gushes one.- Well shot, my lord.

Man's pocket should be opened clear from hers

For all the cunt-coins to be counted well.

Alexander VI. The epicurian can say: "Hold, enough,"

For he knows not one pleasure that gives pain.

Lucrezia. Philosophers will gladly study leaves

Of her two buttocks with more diligence

Than Aristostle's book of animals.

Alexander VI. A priest would drop his breviary here.

Lucrezia. The locusts stop their songs to hear such cries,

And flies fall on their bedsheets all aflame.

Alexander VI. His hands already on the altar, poised

At once to bless with holy bread and wine

The sacred tabernacle.

Lucrezia. A ceremony answered by the crowd.

She has a thing on her that might awake

A sickly newborn pip as any man's.

Alexander VI. Behold the altar-boy, whose bells ring out
 During the elevation of the blessed host.

Ah, gaze and gaze again, sweet daughter, ah!

The man who dropped his cross already sweats

To resurrect sweet Jesus from his tomb.

Enter Cesare Borgia, naked

Cesare. May not a soldier join the happy fray?

Alexander VI. Perhaps that would be too unseemly, son.

Lucrezia. I am the one who dreams of man and makes
 Her fingers end the work he but began.

Cesare. Lucrezia much prefers meat without bone.

Lucrezia. Apothecaries well may rail on love,
 When their cold pestle shakes without the bowl.

Alexander VI. Church music: organs played with noted sheets.

Lucrezia. Watch, holy father, after our high mass,
 How man can blow a woman's candle out.

Girolamo M. More liquor on which women rarely choke.

Cesare. Leave trifling, sister; danger is afoot,
 Which must be whispered to the innocent.

Exeunt Cesare and Lucrezia

Alexander VI. We thank you, poet,
for this merry play.

Girolamo M. High pleasures wait
still on the expert eye.

Alexander VI. Dismiss the naked
knaves, but say who wins.

Girolamo M. Come, formal
majesties of woman's form
Combined with man's; in private
cabinets
Your task may end, though barely
begun.

(Exeunt men and women)

Alexander VI. Our whores are
warned to dally honestly;
If not, as punishment for loss of
faith,
We see them pressed with thirty-
one.

Girolamo M. And some with
seventy-nine.

Alexander VI. And others sharply
beggared with knife-thrusts
On purblind faces.

Exit Pope Alexander VI and re-
enter Cesare, disguised as a
servant

Girolamo M. Who are you?

Cesare. My lord Cesare's newly
hired serf.

Girolamo M. May his bold
dukedom dance in ash and fire.

Cesare. What, not Cesare's friend,
despite your lauds?

Cesare does not please your
poetship?

Girolamo M. Cesare re-invents
each mortal sin.

That so-says-Aristotle, so-says-
God,

Assured to spit his geometric
drops,

Reads genius in his mirror,
defecates

In doctoral terms, while he sits
afraid

That Alexander's blessing on his
wars

May not arrive, a lowly mouthless
cur

Reciting martial theses to himself
While grunting in each corner of
the church,

No wiser than King Solomon's dry
prick,

Or mindless ape, does more harm
in the world

Than the belief in God. Should he
escape,

There is no poison in all Italy.

Cesare. I am surprised. Is not
Cesare known

As the new Ceasar of our modern
times?

Girolamo M. Hoy, is a pumpkin
full? He is a cat

Who sleeps and cowers in his
excrement.

Cesare. No virtues?

Girolamo M. None.

Cesare. Not even as a lover?

Girolamo M. I have heard oaths
from women of all kinds

His phallus is much softer than his tongue.

Bread without yeast cannot rise.

He can brag,

But untried virgins recognize at once

His so-called largess cannot elongate

Beyond the stalk of pears. May nobles die

Together with ideas of their god.

Cesare. Allow him to be a good dancer.

Girolamo M. True, slightly better than his wounded horse.

Cesare. Miguel will soon upbraid you for these lies.

Enter Michele da Corella with an axe; Cesare removes his disguise

Girolamo M. Oh, mercy!

Cesare. I'll show you mercy after lopping off

Your favorite hand, with the other kept

Intact to scratch your nose and arse.

Girolamo M. A soul whose very fabric is composed

Of magnanimity forgets a jest.

Cesare. I pardon treachery from enemies,

But not from friends, for otherwise a duke

Is pinched with fears of constant danger.

Girolamo M. A pardon! A pardon!

Cesare. More staring.

Michele. Come, sir, you are too tedious.

Cesare. Miguel, slice off half of his tongue as well.

Should he complain, he will be made to know

How like a woman to piss downward straight.

Exeunt Michele and the weeping Girolamo Mancioni and re-enter Pope Alexander VI

Alexander VI. Warmed adder by the heron's beak snapped off.

My son, I know, is kind to man or beast,

But hates the barest insult to our fame.

Cesare. My brain's a calendar of men I hate,

Whose numbers are crossed out with their own blood.

A zany with much pain learns how to learn.

Thus, to be cruel to a fool's no sin.

For ignorance, by his own tongue betrayed,

Rejoices in his prison while he knows

With learning he may wed and happily.

(Screams within

Miguel should first have cut away the tongue.

Re-enter Girolamo Mancioni with
a bloody stump

How's this? Can dripping trunks
walk off from us?

Re-enter Michele da Corella

Michele. No chance of that
disgrace.

Cesare. He sways and faints at
last. Bind up the gap
And then complete your task in
swiftest haste.

Michele. And so I will.

Exeunt Michele carrying out
Girolamo Mancioni

Cesare. Should I shog off?

Alexander VI. Cesare rises to work
and men fall.

Exeunt Pope Alexander VI and
Cesare

Act 3. Scene 7. A battle-field near
Piombino. 1502

Enter Michele da Corella and
Leonardo da Vinci

Michele. An old Etruscan port may
favor men
Who mean to dash old Italy to
hell.

Leonardo. May it fall off with her
unproven tales.
Old men and famished spiders can
enjoy

An unswept corner, not men of
our faith

In sciences and arts. I dream of
brooms

To push out roaches with high
miters crowned,

In dining halls or kitchens feeding
well,

In summer and in winter well
content,

Believing those impossibilities

Which serve their belly and the
puffy couch,

To push out hats of wrinkled
coughing dukes

We must bow hatless under,
though they stink

Worse than their shirts of moral
rectitude

Erected for their ease, with
magistrates

Who in their plenty virtues mix
with vice

When noble persons must be
judged by them.

Michele. Ha, Leonardo does not
once regret

Leaves of the ancient order
withering.

Leonardo. One falling leaf can
frighten troops of hares.

Michele. I sing at danger though
he blows nearby.

Leonardo. A cock will crow at
rising of the sun,

Though on the day the knife's
prepared for him.

Michele. Can cocks live longer in
obscurity?

Leonardo. Have you not heard my tale of the snowflake?

A patch of snow spread on a beauteous sheet

Of untouched ice at viewless topmost heights

Of a great mountain, left alone to think,

A single flake amid the mound began

To reason in this way: "Am I not vain

And proud to lie in sun so loftily,

I, a mere speck of frozen unseen dust

Atop this mighty mountain of deep snow?

Should I not lie much lower? Who deserves

Such elevations, ha? What if the wind

Decides to scatter my companions? Then

I'll die alone or be blown off with them.

I must go down in quiet vales of sleep,

Where tempests of the world can never heed

A snowflake meant to live unnumbered years."

Thus, shaking and detaching his frail form

From the thick crust, the snowflake happily

Fell deep below in the soft vale of sleep

On a white field of lovely perfect snow.

This happened in December. Late in March,

The snowflake, startled by the rising sun,

Began to quiver, snowflakes one by one

Disposed to melt; all his friends wept and sighed

With running in large rills along the vale,

Till nothing could be seen but muddy ground.

Michele. Great thanks. I will sleep quieter tonight.

Exit Michele, enter Pope Alexander VI and Cesare Borgia

Alexander VI. We smoothly glide on galleys manned with art,

Pontifical in hurry and delight.

Cesare. Laboriously rowed onward by a band

Of heaving, weary, sweaty black-browed slaves.

Alexander VI. Men for the slightest of offenses bound

In chains, condemned to ply the painful oar.

Cesare. I grant you that abuse.

Alexander VI. Is this the dreaming fellow you spoke of?

Cesare. No dreamer but our chieftest engineer,

Receiving gladly as his heavy charge

Erection of two fortresses of might.

Alexander VI. Now Tuscany must tremble, all aghast,

At thought-on operations of our son.

Your thrusts and widest rages must amaze.

Leonardo. Imagination leads to error. Thus,

Believe experience; that will never fail.

The rest is foolishness and dreams of dreams.

Cesare. I see truth, for I am the man I am.

Leonardo. No truth outside of mathematics lives.

Cesare. I will undo foes geometrically.

Duke Montefeltro of Urbino meets

My Vitellozzo as a friend sincere;
There watch a subtle knave explode him quite.

Leonardo. That duke is mankind shorn of any art

Or science, not worth a dry bean, your grace.

Should a man say: "I do not care to know

The history of rocks, of bird or cloud,

Because these have no uses to my mind,"

He is not worth the rock he sits upon,

A filler-up of privies and no more.

The good burn to know all or to obtain,

While cold humanity may sink or starve.

Alexander VI. Unless your man, in wretched toiling spent,

Can sweeten our filled tables in his hive.

Exeunt Pope Alexander VI, Cesare, and Leonardo

Act 3. Scene 8. The palace at Urbino. 1502

Enter Vitellozzo Vitelli and Niccolo Machiavelli

Vitellozzo. During his third campaign of the Romagna,
Twelve thousand men-at-arms cheer mightily

In sordid drudgery, but to draw close

To such a man of men.

Niccolo. He is the prince, though none can yet exist,

A vicious, cruel man, yet a good duke,

For only potent hands corruption daunt.

Urbino is by perfidy made his,
And you his agent.

Vitellozzo. True, as Duke Montefeltro's honored guest,

I spoke to him of urgent, pressing needs

To conquer Tuscany before men say:

"There is some danger here in Tuscany."

This duke said: "Levy, Vitellozzo mine,

A thousand soldiers from my duchy; go,

For I'm well pleased to please my
guest toight."

The next day, his own soldiers
overthrew

The duke, who hurried over
precious rugs

And marble floors from us
without his shoes.

Niccolo. A godly piece of faithless
treachery!

Vitellozzo. As envoy of coy
Florence you see much.

Niccolo. And much rejoice at it,
but never yet

Have I beheld such doleful
trickery.

Impetuous natures lead their
enemies

To foolish and improvident
misdeeds.

A prudent prince will rashly run a
course

Where adversaries tumble, while a
cold

And witless prince will think and
think again,

Until all's lost with thinking how
he may.

Enter Cesare Borgia

Cesare. Pushed off and baffled by
our compasses:

The mathematic ending of a duke!

Vitellozzo. Urbino's citizens beg
on their knees

For peace at last from wars of
tyrant dukes.

Cesare. Urbino's citizens will not
be harmed.

Niccolo. O calculated
magnanimity,

How lovely is your dress, how fair
your form!

Urbino's citizens are now your
own.

Exit Vitellozzo

Cesare. I offer Florence violent
services

As her protector for at least three
years

For forty thousand ducats in
exchange.

Niccolo. Good.

Cesare. At last a man who
understands my heart!

Exeunt Cesare and Niccolo

Act 4. Scene 1. A battle-field near
Imola. 1502

Sounds of alarm in battle. Enter
Michele da Corella and Francesco
Gonzaga

Michele. Where lie aghast the
bled-white dazed poltroons?

Francesco. Perhaps inside these
thickets.

Michele. Tear off each leaf with a
determined will.

(A soldier of Imola is revealed)

Francesco. Why do you gasp and
quail before our looks?

We merely intend to murder you.

Michele. Do it at once, before the knave complains.

(Francesco cuts the soldier's throat

Francesco. A man with a cut throat cannot complain.

Enter Cesare Borgia

Michele. Cesare is fair fortune's minion.

Cesare. As first duke of Romagna, I arrive

To take my own. Imola is the town
Where stragglers who remain
must yield or die.-

Go bury that dead offal.

Exit Francesco carrying off the dead soldier

Michele. Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

I laugh to think on Camerino caught

By foolishly distraught negotiations.

Cesare. Three days of celebration for our feats

In Rome! In preparation for attacks

Against Bologna, tame Imola swears

To muster up at least a thousand men,

Thus lessening dependence on my mess

Of hungry mercenaries.

Michele. I taste the taking of that city-state.

But yet hear news that should affright your faith:

Orsini, Baglioni, and Gentile
Stand far aside against Bologna plans,

Refusing to march forward with our troops.

Cesare. Good.

Michele. Aborted pacts with Florence are sniffed out

By Vitellozzo, former man of trust,

Who with the Baglioni threatens us.

Cesare. I do not threaten, but achieve my will

Before it is thought of.

Michele. A potent league is secretly convened

At dark Magione, on the quiet grounds

Where Cardinal Orsini rules at will:

Our Vitellozzo and Oliverotto da Fermo,

With Bentivoglio, Baglioni, Petrucci, and

Orsini, challenge won Urbino and
Sweat hard to reinstate the ousted duke,

A well-affrighted Guidobaldo da Montefeltro.

Cesare. I'm in no manner terrified, Miguel.

Michele. And yet perhaps a great man should.

Aristippus, during a storm at sea,

Was asked by his companion, pale
but stout,

While gazing quietly on roaring
waves:

"Why do you grasp the mast,
philosopher,

With face as yonder sails?" His
answer was:

"You tremble for a miserable fop,
While I am fearful for Aristippus."

Cesare. You'll soon discover
methods in my faith,

When we will welcome adversaries
well,

Cesare being seen and then not
seen.

Deceit, you are my visage; I have
none.

Enter from behind a second
soldier of Imola with a crossbow

Michele. Stand back, your grace;
do not risk injury.

(*Cesare* stabs and kicks the
soldier to death)

Cesare. He'll make me angry soon.
Read what is poured

On the blank ground from this
slave's open trunk.

Michele. "An emperor or
nothing." Ha! Ha! Ha!

Cesare. Go bury him beside the
other lump.

Exit *Michele* carrying out the
second dead soldier and enter
Niccolo Machiavelli

Niccolo. Dark traitors lurk.

Cesare. At Senigallia, watch and
stand amazed:

I will propose a truce with
Bentivoglio,

Petrucchi, and *Orsini*, which will
not

Be soon forgotten in the book of
wars.

Niccolo. I know *Cesare* thinks to
win when men

Cannot yet dream they can. A tale
is told

Of *Protagoras*, a philosopher

Who taught his student oratory's
charms

And in return was to receive much
gold

When the said-pupil won his first
court-case.

The lazy student never entered
courts,

But slept the drowsy time away at
home,

Thus cheating *Protagoras* of his
prize.

This *Protagoras* thought: "My gold
is won,

For I will challenge him in court,
where if

I win he loses, if he wins I win."

Cesare. You'll garner Senigallian
gold for this.

Niccolo. My horses cannot feed

On oats of promises.

Cesare. I'll feed one horse with its
philosopher.

Exeunt *Cesare* and *Niccolo*

Act 4. Scene 2. The Bernardino
palace at Senigallia. 1502

Enter Michele da Corella and
Francesco Gonzaga

Francesco. I weep on our
unfortunate defeat
At lost Calmazzo, mud-pool of our
blood.

Michele. Against Vitelli and Orsini
there may yet

Arise some clouds and thunder.

Francesco. Of greater danger are
Cesare's frowns.

Michele. Here at the Bernardino
palace, watch
How vengeance sometimes strikes
men unawares.

Enter Cesare Borgia

Cesare. Francesco, bid warm
welcome to our guests.

Exit Francesco

Michele. Since boldly seizing
Senigallia fields,
Proud Vitellozzo with a mighty
tongue

Commands as if he meant to equal
you.

I heard him say, as a lord of few
words:

"Cesare must with Vitellozzo
speak,

So that we understand each
other's mind.

Your master's secret-dark
negotiations

With Florence are discovered; he
may not

Control as once he did. Propose to
him

A meeting at the Bernardino
palace, where

Francesco Orsini, Paolo Orsini and
his son,

Together with Oliverotto da
Fermo,

All rebels stiff against his tyranny,

Must soon divide the land
between ourselves."

Cesare. I will negotiate with all of
them,

Though chamber-pots of their
ambition stretch

In much too large a space for
buttocks lean.

Michele. We hear of Flavius, a lean
low-born scribe,

Who, named as aedile, not a
nobleman

For him arising from his chair,
displaced

His own beside the doorway of the
hall,

Where those who scorned to rise
could see him sit.

Cesare. For emulations I examples
lack.

I am myself a model to myself

And can speak nothing to explain
myself:

Events will show the kind of man I
am.

Michele. Here comes our
Vitellozzo with his neck.

Cesare. Ha, with him first.
A rope, a dead face, and security.
Dissemble, hand on mouth
without a smile,
Until he seems like his own
lifeless trunk.

Enter Vitellozzo Vitelli

Ha, Vitellozzo, you do not arrive
As once you did, a friend to me
and Rome.

Vittellozzo. The times are altered.

Cesare. In fifteen-hundred, two
brief years ago,

Our Vitellozzo with Orsini swore
To make peace with the pope. And
so we told

A friend our plans, engaged him in
our wars,

His valiant prowess honored, till
last year

He chose with weasel heart to
bare sharp fangs

Against affrighted hares in
Florence, moved

By the demise of Paolo at their
hands,

A brother put to death for
treachery.

Vittellozzo. And took Arezzo.

Cesare. Which I plucked back.

Vittellozzo. But I hold Senigallia.

Cesare. As Senigallia was with
violence won,

Let Senigallia be with violence
lost.

You are today tied with some
potent friends

Disarmed and weak in one lone
single place.

Vitellozzo. Call forth the three
Orsini.

Cesare. A bear, a tiger are to their
own selves

A friend, but man, that traitor to
himself,

His deadliest enemy.

Michele. One word, a stink, and
then an end to words.

Vitellozzo. What iron collar is
this, my good friends?

Cesare. To cheat a cheater is no
knavery.

(*Cesare* garrots Vitellozzo to
death

I can enjoy a righteous garrotting.
The dead's augmented with
another fool.

Go strangle with good cheer
Oliverotto.

Should the pope capture Giulio
Orsini

And Cardinal Giambattista Orsini,
Bestow the same New Year's gift to
all three

Orsini caught in bear-traps. Falling
leaves:

When winds of fortune buffet,
traitors die.

Exit Michele bearing Vitellozzo
and enter Niccolo Machiavelli

Niccolo. An excellent display of
cunning art!

A Nestor at the age of twenty!

A mirror for all statesmen!

Cesare. Go flatter horses with
coins promised you.

Niccolo. Vitelli's heart is
treachery's abortion:

Not bad enough to be considered
good.

Cesare. Thus we choke off at once
Magione's league.

Exeunt Cesare and Niccolo

Act 4. Scene 3. The ducal palace
at Ferrera. 1503

Enter Lucrezia Borgia and Pietro
Bembo

Pietro. I cannot hope to live with
flute-less mouth,

For I must pipe out man's or
woman's love,

To sing their praises as I walk
along,

Lest I, like echoes or chimeras
that

Disturb the night, rot on
unfruitful ground.

Lucrezia. I sought you with my
mouth to yours in dreams.

When April with September subtly
join

For flower and for fruit, in nights
alone,

Your lune-like thoughts shine on
Lucrezia's den

Of secret pleasures, moistened by
their beams.

Pietro. I wish that more than
thoughts could enter there.

Lucrezia. How can thoughts be
made flesh and flesh revive

As thoughts when I am married to
a duke?

Pietro. A woman's broth is cooled
by placing it

Back in the fire.

Lucrezia. Variety in love is
dangerous,

Fixed and unfixed as quick as
thoughts or dreams,

Uncertain constellations, where
we can

Be hunted, by a lion chased to
death,

Or by a scorpion's sting cry out in
woe,

Mere shapes, though arbitrary, all
we have,

On us imposed, where if we
disobey

And follow our own courses, we
become

As colored maps by wearied
children drawn,

Which neither they nor us can
understand,

Inventions to be thrown and cast
afar.

Pietro. Then let us live as
constellations robbed

From those already known, where
we may hide

From hunters, live in northern
countries where

A lion never pounces, scorpions
freeze

Their pincers and their tails, quite
secretly.

Lucrezia. Books of amours, whose
second syllable
Pronounced forms with the lips a
lovely kiss.

Pietro. If I cannot enjoy Lucrezia's
love,

Let me be ugly death's; if I must
shun

Her sheets and pillow, let mine be
at last

A muddy wormy one. Some men I
know

Can live without thought's phallus,
but not I.

Pietro's thought is flesh and flesh
his thought.

Lucrezia. Such an affinity between
a man

And woman has not in all
certainty

In any age been seen or read
about.

Pietro. Love-gospel everlasting in
effects.

Lucrezia. Press your lips on my
own as sacraments

Of lewdness and delight.- Four lips
lie drowned.

Pietro. You have four more man
can caress or taste.

Lucrezia. O, let them not like
pears be left unchewed.

Pietro. I need to take my knife out
to peel them.

Lucrezia. At best take in your
hand, for my lord's near.

Pietro. So is your pleasure, as
three fingers glide

Like caravels with spices laden full
Into your secret cavern.

Lucrezia. The harbor's all afire.-
More briskly, love.-

Prevented! Of all times the worst I
know!

Enter Alfonso d'Este

Alfonso E. Is supper burning?

Lucrezia. The chimney only,
husband.

Alfonso E. Foul smoke in palaces.
And yet we hope

A dreamy poet may remain awhile
To swallow cherries or some other
sweet.

Pietro. My mouth on all of these! I
thank your grace.

Alfonso E. I'll see if at Ferrera
plates to guests

Can be well served.

Exit Alfonso d'Este

Pietro. If this be living, I accept
this death;

If this be dying, I accept this life:
My life-time in a place resembling
more

A tomb than houses, where a poet
thinks.

Lucrezia. What of my husband?

Pietro. What is a husband?

An in-existent number, the square
root

Of negatives invented to
Enliven our devices.

Lucrezia. My love-thoughts never
went to school,

To doze on wooden seats, or look
outside,

Where lessons stiffen both the head and arse.

Pietro. Since Adam's time, no happier man has stalked

Inside imagined gardens as I have.

Lucrezia. My solitude's a house without one door,

But many understand your faces well,

Since they are famed abroad, well bruited as

The pit of shame for lost virginities.

Pietro. I am no more that man. If court-love fail,

Let us reserve our board with country cheer,

Cream on our lips in haystacks tumbling deep.

I'll wear your colors, shirtsleeves and coat dyed

In mulberry and gold for my near-bride.

Exeunt Lucrezia and Pietro

Act 4. Scene 4. Adriano da Corneto's house in Rome. 1503

Enter Pope Alexander VI, Cesare, and Michele da Corella

Michele. No longer can one find the golden cross

On a pope's shoes with all that blood on them.

Alexander VI. As shepherd of the church, we comfort well

Rent prisoners inside Saint Angelo.

But yet we frown, despite Cesare's sleights,

When in San Quirico, nine women, old

And rich, were upside down from naked feet

Suspended, to make known to us at last

Where lie great treasures. While the fire consumed

Their legs, all under torture died in vain.

Cesare. I mourn the burial of so many coins.

Alexander VI. Our tricks succeed with better fortune, son.

Hear: Cardinal Giambattista Orsini Lay dying of thirst in Saint Angelo,

When I requested from his mother for

A glass of water to his cracked white lips

Two thousand ducats and a pearl of price.

She yielded. He from very joy of drink

At long last offered, trembled, choked, and died.

Thus, we obtain his fortune and his end.

More noblemen by our especial care

Are poisoned, their goods seized. The cardinals,

Besides, are now created for a larger sum:

One hundred thirty thousand ducats clear.

Cesare. But yet I worry that King Louis thinks

My power is too great, in any way
Must not extend to Florence and
Bologna.

The king rejoices in alliances
Between Bologna, Florence, and
Siena,

Which I cannot without some fear
impugn.

Alexander VI. Orsini are his
friends.

Cesare. A business almost clean
escaped my mind.

Have you yet killed my friend
Francesco Troche?

Michele. Yes, strangled in his
house as he prepared

To speak to French spies matters
of negotiation

Between yourself and Spain.

Cesare. A cherished labor. What of
the Orsini?

Alexander VI. Destroy all the
Orsini.

Cesare. Is this command wise?
Giulio Orsini

May as a useful hostage be
attached.

Reflect that Giangiordano Orsini
Can keep Bracciano safely, doze
untouched

For being nearer traitor Louis'
love,

And for the golden chain of
cockleshells,

The order of Saint Michael, worn
with pride

On his neck, which prevents my
slicing it.

Alexander VI. And Niccolo Orsini
is a general

Of Venice well protected. More
work, son:

We first attend to profit at our
hands,

To Cardinal Adriano da Corneto's
store.

Cesare. Miguel, have you prepared
the usual bowls?

Michele. I have.

Alexander VI. Fetch them at once.
We'll pledge this man's good
health.

Exit Michele and enter Cardinal
Adriano da Corneto

Adriano. Lords of the spirit and
the temporal,

As much or more as my house can
afford

In gladsome cheer I offer, yours as
mine,

Although poor in regard of two
such guests,

Yet welcome as a loving
countryman.

Alexander VI. On Lawrence day,
we are attached to bars

Of friendly greeting, burning in
our joy.

Cesare. I thank our newly minted
cardinal.

Adriano. Ah, cardinal! Do I dream?
Cardinal!

I can repeat that to infinity.

A cardinal! A cardinal! A cardinal!

A mother's dream takes shape in
the real world.

Cesare. Do not shut eyes too soon
on that fair gift.

Adriano. Why not?

Cesare. Priests kiss ambition with far greater love

And rapture than their stoles.

Adriano. Who hates my well-deserved ascension? Read

To me that book of heretics and I Will burn it with the man.

Cesare. A cardinal in mind though not in robe.

Adriano. Ha! Envious? Known to me? Ha? Ha? His name?

Cesare. Known better than your pillowcase at night,

As if he clapped against your cheeks, when you

Speak in your sleep of plots and counter-plots.

Adriano. Is it my friend, Eduardo?

Alexander VI. Men have built palaces from marbles of

Men's graves.

Adriano. He envied my first whore.

Cesare. He is a rock against which no man's toes

Can stumble on unbruised.

Alexander VI. Does this report warm you?

Adriano. A furnace takes all kinds of wood.

Cesare. If you believe a priest can love, expect

To walk on gravel without hearing any sound.

Adriano. He papered my design for children to

Tear down. He once belonged to my own breast,

Spoke for me often, made a merriment

Of my promotions, all except the last.

Cesare. A precious vessel breaks with rinsing.

Re-enter Michele da Corella with three bowls of wine

Our Ganymede without his Jupiter.

Adriano. He brings you plates and vessels?

Alexander VI. Yes, for the sake of our security.

Exit Michele

Adriano. These bowls are rare. I think I can espy

On both of yours red bulls on a green field.

Cesare. To signify the rising Borgia might

On fair and fructifying lands.

Adriano. On mine, green bulls are chiseled well on red.

Cesare. To signify your rising to the robe.

Adriano. But yours is chipped, Cesare.

Cesare. Ha, is it so?

Adriano. Your lips may bleed at it. Drink from my own.

Cesare. Ah, gladly, if it please a cardinal.

Alexander VI. A word, my son.

Cesare. We may speak openly. Miguel returns.

Re-enter Michele da Corella

Adriano. Miguel, you know the wine I offer here.

Michele. No doubt a wholesome beverage, your grace.

Adriano. The best I have. We'll drink to the pope's health.

Cesare. Bring us a second bowl with the green bull.

Michele. The one you finger is the last we have.

Alexander VI. No matter. Bring the red one, then.

Exit Michele

Adriano. Admired workmanship, your holiness.

Alexander VI. Yours, worthy cardinal.

Adriano. Ha? Can a man ascend to heaven twice?

Alexander VI. You may keep mine so long as you draw breath.

Adriano. Our gratitude is wonderfully mute.

Re-enter Michele da Corella with a bowl and a bottle of wine

Alexander VI. Look here; I gave the cardinal my bowl.

Michele. Ah, well.

Cesare. The one you carry is the pope's, Miguel.

Michele. I understand that well.

(Michele pours the wine

Cesare. Ha, Adriano, I do not recall

Whether your garden harbors strawberries.

Adriano. Their ripeness is known throughout Italy.

Cesare. Show them to me.

Exeunt Cesare and Adriano; Michele pours a black liquid in Adriano's bowl; re-enter Cesare Borgia and Cardinal Adriano da Corneto

These look like blood poured out from mouths of men.

Adriano. But sweeter, certainly.

(Michele falls; Adriano takes Pope Alexander VI's bowl

Alexander VI. Ha! Ha! Miguel looks fearfully about. (he drinks

Cesare. Ha, father, no!

Alexander VI. Ah, what?

Adriano. Does my wine please?

Alexander VI. O, poisoned! I mistook the bowl.

Adriano. Ha? Meant for me?

Alexander VI. O, fires in my bowels!

Adriano. I have become my eyeball's prisoner.

Alexander VI. One drop and a pope dies.

Adriano. Make peace with the world's maker.

Alexander VI. No, no. We understand each other. (he dies

Cesare. Dead! Dead? Ha, Ceasar, or else nothing still.

Michele. I'll plunder in the pope's apartments all

A grieving man can lug with his two hands.

Exit Michele

Adriano. A bull from mouth and nose bleeds on green cloths.

I will no longer dine with Borgias.- Ha,

Why are you sick? I never saw you drink.

Cesare. I breathe too freely night-air.

Adriano. Crawl out, Cesare, as best as you can.

Exit Cesare, crawling out

I honor him as he would honor me.

Exit Adriano, striking and bearing Pope Alexander VI's corpse

Act 4. Scene 5. The Vatican in Rome. 1503

Enter Michele da Corella with bags and Francesco Gonzaga

Francesco. Is rumor drunk or is the Borgia pope-

Michele. Quite dead, Francesco; help me carry these:

I run with money, silver, jewels, plates,

Three hundred thousand ducats in large bags.

Francesco. What says Cesare?

Michele. He speaks in groans.

Enter Cesare Borgia, sick

Cesare. My skin peals off clean after each cold bath,

And violet-colored streaks throughout appear.

No, do not stare; Cesare's face is death's,

Far more to others than his own. Attend:

Prospero Colonna aims his wrath my way,

Armed with Orsini's and Savelli's hosts.

Orsini, hearing on this best of news,

Against some Borgia friends and family

Plan many freaks of vengeance, one of them

Performed already at Pietro Matuzzi's,

Vile outrage practiced on his noble wife,

My sister, Isabella, unbelieved

By many. Yet we'll do as if all's true.

To hold them off in deepest numbing fear,

Go burn Orsini's palace to the ground.

Francesco. I can do it alone.

Cesare. Is the pope buried?

Michele. I saw the pope's corpse bloated in such ways

As to lose trace of any human
 form,
 And what is stranger still, the
 corpse began
 To putrify as soon as we placed it
 Down on the table with the
 implements.
 I think it is as broad as it is long.
 No groom with open eyes dares to
 advance
 And touch it. Cardinals who come
 to laugh
 Return back home to cry out in
 deep fear.
 We dragged it by the feet with
 ropes and chains,
 When all its colors changed to
 mulberry,
 With black spots covered, swollen
 nose and mouth
 Distended like a deep gulf open
 wide,
 And fat lips almost covering the
 face.
 Its shape was such that we,
 accursed, were forced
 To pummel it inside the coffin
 with
 Large clubs and crowbars. That
 corpse looked as if
 It did not wish its burial. But at
 last
 We heaved it in and buried it,
 beneath
 A brighter world it was so loath to
 quit.
Cesare. On the world's stage, our
 exits downward lie.
 More marvels for the ignorant!
 This is

To stir some ashes when the fire's
 out.
 As for election of the pope, I may
 Rely upon eleven cardinals
 Of Spain to vote the bolder Borgia
 way,
 But twenty-two of thirty-seven
 votes
 Are watchful-sly Italians', and, it
 must
 Be feared, against my forceful
 governing.

Exit Cesare

Michele. Remove these bags with
 me to help our friends.
Francesco. I hurry with them all to
 harm more foes.

Exeunt Michele and Francesco

Act 4. Scene 6. The castle of Saint
 Angelo in Rome. 1503

Enter Cesare Borgia and Niccolo Machiavelli

Niccolo. Pius the Third is our
 elected pope.
Cesare. A pope already sick and
 withering.
Niccolo. Pius the Third proclaims
 Cesare as
 The captain-general of his fair
 church,
 A sword against his bitter
 enemies:
 Orsini, Baglioni, d'Alviano, and
 Colonna.

Cesare. His current enemies are also mine.

Niccolo. More fearful actions follow. It is said

Gonzalo draws a pact with Spanish troupes,

Abandoning your side completely,
While linking with Orsini, Baglioni,
And d'Alviano, to pursue to death
A worried duke.

Cesare. And therefore I stay in Saint Angelo

Behind these barricades, until the pope

Recovers power with his strength and mine.

Enter Cardinal Giuliano Della Rovere

Giuliano. Pius the Third is dead, a pontiff lorne,

From an infection after surgery,
A twenty-six-day pope.

Cesare. You may obtain much from that sad demise.

Giuliano. The maximal seat.

Cesare. Do I confer with Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere,

Who once rebelled against Pope Alexander

With help from Charles the Eight for Aragon?

Giuliano. Your enemy.

Cesare. I saw a France that pillaged fearful Rome,

That entered our rich houses, raped our wives,

Took food away and raiment, with this Charles

Proclaimed as king of Naples by the pope.

Giuliano. I saw Cesare follow this crowned king

With nineteen horses bearing chests of price,

But yet one day the follower escaped

With two of them, and when the others were

Uncovered quickly, nothing could be found.

Cesare. Cesare I am still.

Giuliano. With votes from Spanish cardinals, I may

Hope for the prize and you the honored name

Of captain-general.

Cesare. I kiss your toe and hand, a pope's, no less.

Exit Cardinal Giuliano

Niccolo. More goodly deadly policies of state!

Cesare. And thus a friendly foe becomes a friend.

Exeunt Cesare and Niccolo

Act 5. Scene 1. The Vatican in Rome. 1503

Enter Giuliano Della Rovere as Pope Julius II, attended

Julius II. Call to our holy throne Romagna's duke,

Our captain-general.

Enter Cesare Borgia

Julius II. Leave us.

Exeunt attendants

Julius II. We urge Faenza, Fano,
many more

Who frown and bite the lip in
servitude

Not to revolt against Romagna's
duke.

As pope with fierce ambition for
our state,

We long to seize far more
Romagna towns.

We have seen from afar some
petty lords

Perplexed to bloody ends by
Borgia arms.

Speak boldly: can Cesare hurt
more foes?

Cesare. Few men except Pope
Julius can doubt it.

Julius II. We are especially taxed
with bitter thoughts

Concerning properties by Venice
held.

Speak: is that ring too lofty for a
knight

To spear precisely in lists of war?

Cesare. Add Florence to your
Venice, add Siena,

Bologna, cities deemed impossible
To win and live in free security,

Then multiply the rest of Italy.

Julius II. A bridegroom's joy in
bed is faint and dull

And not to be compared with
these high words

Assailing a pope's ears. We aim to
hit

The mark of marriage with a
worthy bolt:

Francesco, our loved nephew. Is
the man

Too base a match for Valentino's
child?

Cesare. Not if the man in him can
rise. Agreed:

A Borgia with a Della Rovere to tie
The copulative knot of interest.

Enter Niccolo Machiavelli

Julius II. The envoy of the
Florentines appears.

Niccolo. Our newly blessed
holiness!

Julius II. We summon you to clear
Cesare's march

In Tuscany. Request the
Florentines

To yield safe-conduct for our
general.

Niccolo. I go immediately.

Cesare. Reach Florence, if you can,
before I start.

Exit Cesare

Julius II. Say, Machiavelli: can a
pope defeat

Proud Venice, who suspects no
harm from him?

Niccolo. If you can love Cesare,
thrive and reign.

Julius II. Cesare is now ours.

Niccolo. My Florence, fearing to
be frightened still,

Is quite unlikely to provide the
duke
With a safe-conduct, thus refusing
one
Who can obtain by force what he
requests.
So our republics, like most private
men,
From fear or pride, make enemies
of friends.

Exeunt Pope Julius II and Niccolo

Act 5. Scene 2. The Vatican in
Rome. 1503

Enter Michele da Corella and
Francesco Gonzaga

Michele. We hear a boisterous sea.
I fear much
Our captain-pope loves his
ambition, let
The crew fare as they will. We
stand on rocks
And fearfully look over a decline,
Steep, with no pathway to invite
ascent
Or safely help the castaways slip
down,
With surging billows beating at
our ears
And hissing death's approach.
Francesco. Where are the troops a
pope once promised us?
Michele. On bedsheets kissing
wives.
Francesco. Well thought on! I
should do the same, Miguel.
I have grown very amorous of late

And so towards Ferrara I should
trip
To study how Lucrezia may be
won,
Provided she is still a woman cleft
For love, with forms a man
expects to find,
Voluptuously inclined to him
alone.

Exit Francesco and enter the
pope's soldiers

Michele. Ah, dregs of slaves, I do
not love your looks.
Am I alone? So brave that all rush
forth?
Who wishes to die in the Vatican?
Whose throat should I cut first?

(They fight; a soldier falls

How skillfully a fool skates on his
blood
To death! Come, master barbers, I
can see
You shave my hairs dexteriously,
But I will shave your flesh. Ha, all
at once?

(They fight; a soldier's eyes are
burnt out by Michele's brand

Here you may find a man of force
and craft,
Adept at necropyromaniacy,
Who longs to trudge forth
wetshod in more blood.

(They fight; the soldiers capture Michele

Soldiers. Mouse in a trap! Mouse in a trap!

Exeunt Michele and soldiers, bearing the dead and injured

Act 5. Scene 3. The castle of Saint Angelo in Rome. 1503

Enter Cesare Borgia, guarded

Cesare. He thinks to conquer all Romagna best

Without Cesare. Slaves in state are slaves.

The world with my strong arm might have been his,

To elbow roughly kings and emperors.

Enter Pope Julius II

Julius II. Cesare captured! Let all Borgia men

Stand so, to show the world a pope is good.

Cesare. One can find under holy Peter's rock

A scorpion, who survives for many days

Without a louse to chew on, then attacks.

Julius II. Is this not prettily done? Have we played

The traitor well?

Cesare. Should not a pope be loyal?

Julius II. To Jesus, not to men.

Cesare. Dreams make your power and in a night's sleep

You may lose it and cry: "I dream no more."

Julius II. As captive shorn at Ostia's citadel,

Our legates, Cardinals Remolino And Soderini visited your cell,

To take from you the coded secret words

Of entry into cities of Romagna's might.

Cesare. Did I not spurn their hats in sewer pools?

Julius II. Miguel is seized and held.

Cesare. And what of that?

Julius II. Miguel is tortured in an awful way.

Cesare. I can sleep on his wheel.

Julius II. The strongest bawl and wail on our tout ropes.

Cesare. He's in the world alive: why should he not?

Julius II. Miguel will be released, for I have you.

Cesare. One holds more safely vipers by the tail.

Julius II. Come, eagle, change your diet; here is bait

Fit for Promethean beaks on Scythia's mount;

Let him be tied to Ixion on his wheel,

Or roll with Sisiphus both up and down

The sweaty ball of rock in heat of noon;

Let hopes of pagans and of Christians lug

A Borgia to each torture hell
contains-

No, a pope's prison beats the
devil's hell.

Cesare. I'll rest the better after
arduous toils.

Julius II. A withered root will be a
feast to you.

Cesare. I have grown fat with
blood of many men.

Julius II. You will be put
religiously to death.

Cesare. Cesare dead is no Cesare.
Thus,

I will reveal, false Pluto, coded
words

Of all Romagna fortresses, while
chained

In castle dungeons of Saint
Angelo.

Julius II. Fetch ink and paper for
our prisoner.

Exeunt Pope Julius II, Cesare, and
guards

Act 5. Scene 4. A battle-field in
Naples. 1504

Enter Gonzalo de Córdoba and
soldiers

Gonzalo. Great triumphs in
Garigliano's fields!

Rest, soldiers. With our Spanish
arms of might,

I beat away the French from
Naples' realm,

Where King Fernando and Queen
Isabel

May squeeze their pleasures in a
smaller bed.

The Spanish farmer grasps
decisively

The neck of the French cock to
cut it off.

His gains, well fought, well won,
are due as well

To ardors of Duke Valentino's
arms,

Who, freed from bondage by his
Spanish friends,

Have done for us what few may
yet believe.

He seems a clock whose dial
points the end

Of day for Italy. He was- O, no,

I cannot say what he was to the
French,

A thing that strikes dead ere it
shows itself,

Assured fee for sextons, widow's
curse,

Begetter of lost orphans, muffled
knell

Announcing that loved friends are
heaped in dust.

Our Spanish cardinals, with
victory

Flushed as red as their hats, forgo
their seats

Of dignity and whoop like village
grooms

With our ambassador; all these
expect

The pope to free Cesare to our
hands.

But look who frowning comes for
him again.

Enter Pope Julius II, attended

Julius II. Gonzalo de Córdoba, a
captain's might

Assures you wide renown
throughout the world.

Gonzalo. I thank your holiness.
Our scuffle's won
Thanks to the captain-general of
Rome.

Julius II. Yield back Cesare.

Gonzalo. Ha! Why, your holiness?
Escorted first

By Carvajal, the noted cardinal
Of Santa Croce in Jerusalem,
Your general departed merrily
To Ostia, to take ship for France,
where lie

A wife and king who honor
promises.

Julius II. We are not minded to
part easily

With prisoners. Instructions to
this priest,
This Carvajal, were given so that
he

Should wait for further orders on
our part.

But hasty Carvajal decided on his
own

To liberate Cesare when from him
A written statement never to bear
arms

Against the Vatican was first
obtained.

Gonzalo. Then straightway to my
camp Cesare hied,
Where gladly laden with safe-
conduct's form

On Cardinal Remolino's
recommendation,
He won from France wars
Neapolitan.

Julius II. Spain wishes to seize
more; we know you do.

Spain is considering invasion of
Rich lands in Tuscany and then
Milan,

To drive the French from our
peninsula.

Gonzalo. My king suspects
betrayal, for, in truth,

The Spanish legate to the crown
arrives

To free Cesare from unworthy
chains.

Julius II. How, let him go? A pope
obey a king?

You lead a mighty force to
Florence with

Cesare as your captain.

Gonzalo. I do.

Julius II. We have protested to the
king of Spain.

Peruse new orders.

Gonzalo. I must betray, so says
this sorry scroll,

The prisoner's safe-conduct.

Julius II. And in return, the king
obtains from us

A dispensation, so that Catalina
Of Aragon, his daughter, marries
her

Dead husband's brother, heir to
England's crown.

Gonzalo. A mighty captain's
violated trust

Is a sharp dagger emptying his
blood.

Enter Cesare Borgia

Julius II. The prisoner! We find our own again.

You seek revenge against the Florentines

For not allowing you safe passage, duke.

Cesare. Yes. Tremble, Florence, for I come with arms.

Julius II. A traitor is by treachery undone.-

Gonzalo, lead our prisoner away.

Cesare. What of Gonzalo's safe-conduct?

Julius II. Withdrawn by order of the king of Spain.

Gonzalo. A captain weeps on his dishonor. Ah!

Cesare. No wall of stone contains Cesare's will.

Julius II. A Borgia seized in Spain! Our joy's complete.

Gonzalo. Discovered Spain, black shame on royalty.

Cesare. I'll winter on the crevace of a wall

And feed in spring like newts.

Julius II. Die in your wall.

Cesare. A newt can climb atop a pane of glass:

Though slower than a fly, more dangerous

To creatures feeding on his dish of fruits.

Gonzalo. Convey Cesare as our prisoner.

Let him be tied and led away inside

Our fortress high atop Valencia's mount.

Cesare. I'll batter down that bulwark or else die.

Soldiers. Rat in a cage! Rat in a cage!

Exeunt Pope Julius II, Gonzalo, Cesare, and soldiers

Act 5. Scene 5. The duke's palace at Ferrara. 1505

Enter Lucrezia Borgia and Alfonso d'Este in mourning clothes

Alfonso E. The duke my father's dead- why am I not?-

Ercole of Ferrara taking ship

To a new shore, where we see what is not,

Or where, invisibly, who is not sees.

Lucrezia. Imagination cheats. What is is not

In our imaginings. Let us instead Believe in truths obtained from senses and

Sure mathematical determinings.

Hug pleasure to yourself and yield the same

To others: who needs then a god and dreams?

Alfonso E. A life prolonged as his is a disease.

Clasp nearer a wife's heart Ferrara's duke,

Though wearied, sad, dejected, troublesome,

One who once saw what never can
 be seen,
 Imagined life beginning when our
 own's
 Explainable, complete, an entity.
 O, wondrous freedom, to rest
 unafraid
 From menace of impossibilities!
Lucrezia. We grieve for what is
 not. We knew a duke,
 Our sovereign, a duke no longer
 ours,
 Or anybody's duke. He feels no
 pang,
 For he is dead. Why then should
 we lament
 For clay that has no feeling for its
 state?
 See how I idly capture a small fly:
 This creature is your father if it
 fed
 On what must feed on him. Mourn
 for the fly,
 For it may suffer horribly today
 And die, not for a thing much
 lesser than
 A fly, a compost to create new
 lives.
Alfonso E. Then let it go to where
 my father is,
 To air and silence.
Lucrezia. Our present care should
 be for living man.
Alfonso E. You wish to speak of a
 jailed brother's case.
Lucrezia. Because of our Cesare's
 failed escape,
 Where from a turret's height he
 almost threw

The governor of his strong prison
 down,
 To Medina del Campo he is led.
Alfonso E. There let him stay.
Lucrezia. Unthinking husband,
 that must never be.
Alfonso E. Have we no greater
 causes of alarm?
 You know how hotly Julius presses
 us.
Lucrezia. He wants Ferrara as a
 papal state.
Alfonso E. I will bear arms against
 that warring priest.
Lucrezia. Cesare's arms are
 known.
Alfonso E. I fear such friends
 much more than I do foes.
Lucrezia. I beg you, free Duke
 Valentino now.
Alfonso E. Yes, I'll free him, as
 when a man unchains
 A bear, so that the creature
 gratefully
 May bite his neck and crush his
 breast to death.

Exit Lucrezia and enter a servant

Slave, do you stare? no message
 and no news?
 (striking him
 What is the value of a servant if
 He does not come when needed,
 or else if
 He enters when he's not? Consult
 your cheeks
 When next you wonder how a
 duke is served.

Exeunt Alfonso d'Este and the
servant

Act 5. Scene 6. The duke's palace
at Ferrara. 1505

Enter Lucrezia Borgia and
Francesco Gonzaga

Francesco. As Isabella's war-worn
husband and

A lover of big women and small
boys,

I have begun to weary of her love.
Eight children has my Isabella
borne

Of me in Mantua, yet she wearies
me,

First daughter of Ercole d'Este and
The patronness of Ariosto's jousts
Of pricking knighthood in the
bedless fields,

Of huge inspired wonders of the
age

In drawings and in pictures,
novelties

Received like stamps of loved
antiquity,

And yet this worthy woman
wearies me.

Lucrezia. I have borne three,
Francesco: are you not

A-wearied of me, too?

Francesco. Ho, not at all, for none
of those are mine.

Lucrezia. Of courteous chivalry I
have much need.

Francesco. To glide my carack
into darker streams,

What would not amorous
Francesco vow?

Lucrezia. See how my fingers show
what you may get.

Four rounded fingers joined
together with

The index on curved thumb speak
much of me.

Francesco. I burn; I grow.

Lucrezia. And two short fingers
lodged between the thumb

And longer ones reveal a woman's
mind.

Francesco. I rise; I burst.

Lucrezia. In narrower cells my
Cesare pines.

Francesco. Most gladly would I at
great risk unbind

Cesare from the holy devil's snare.
What if a pope and king say no?

Miguel,
As loving friend and keeper of the
codes,

Was pressed hard by the pope, but
what of that?

I'll be squeezed tighter on
Lucrezia's bed

If I achieve Cesare's liberation.

Lucrezia. The death of Isabel,
queen of Castille,

Religion's frantic whore in robes
of state,

Cesare's enemy, implacable

In her desire of a great duke's
restraint,

May do some good in our Castilian
plots.

Francesco. True. King Fernando
and Queen Isabel

Solicited Pope Sixtus on their knees

To authorize the Inquisition for
Spiritual unification in Spain:

One land, one faith, religion's
lasting shame.

Lucrezia. Will you release my
brother from the house

Of death before his grave, mind's
keeper, worse

Than spite of foes on bodies
shrunk in chains?

I have no husband for this heavy
task.

Francesco. Can you lie forked and
open on a bed?

Lucrezia. I beg you, rescue him
first, then we'll kiss.

Exeunt Lucrezia and Francesco

Act 5. Scene 7. A battle-field at
Medina del Campo. 1506

Enter King Juan of Navarre and
Cesare Borgia

Juan. Come, brother-in-law, in our
Spanish wars,

A laurel-leaf may crown a
captain's deeds.

Cesare. Command at once to kill
all traitors here.

Juan. Our enemies swarm for a
lizard's tongue

To pick in air and to enjoy. And
yet

A king may not endanger lives of
worth,

Though foul and bloody rebels
seeking him

Force him in trenches. Borgia's
fame resounds

With louder voices than my
royalty.

Cesare. Your majesty may slumber
quietly.

I am the newt that eats his very
skin,

Unseen in nature to the predator.

Juan. Then heed what pesters
crowned heads of two realms.

The castle of Viana is the stage

Where Louis de Beaumont, of
traitors head,

The count of Lerin, spring of
factions that

Flow quite contrary from the king
of Spain,

Speaks big and blusters in an
actor's mood

While muzzled rapiers in safe
scabbards sleep.

To batter it and to compel
Beaumont

To mute obedience, as my general
Lead on a force that should

astonish him.

Ten thousand men-at-arms in
fighting trim

With cannons reinforced lay siege
to it.

Cesare. With these or less, I'll
shoot bird-Louis down.

Juan. Is Valentino well enough to
war?

Few have heard how with
Benavente's help

Cesare leapt away from prison walls.

Cesare. One dark September night, a cord was let

Down from the crenel of a tower's point,

Where I lay groaning in my cell alone,

From which descending to the castle ditch

Count Benavente's men awaited me.

But when I reached the end of it,

I found the rope too short.

Below me lay a pit of darkness, which

Had long appalled despairing drunken fools

From pushing off, a well unknown, which kills

A man together with his tragedy.

I dropped below, and breaking many bones

On both hands fainted, as if drowned in earth,

Where Benavente's grooms whisked me away.

Juan. A Benavente hoping for your aid

In plots of deep revenge against his king,

Because he wed against the wishes of

The queen, no longer owning a pierced doit

Of all his rich possessions in Castille.

Cesare. I'll fight beside the enemies of kings;

I'll fight against the enemies of kings;

I'll fight against this Louis de Beaumont.

Exeunt King Juan and Cesare

Act 5. Scene 8. The duke's palace
at Ferrara. 1506

Enter Lucrezia Borgia and
Francesco Gonzaga

Lucrezia. With Pietro Bembo and more modest bards

I only somewhat played. You are the man,

Beside my husband, swollen as I wish

For main events.

Francesco. As captain-general of our good church,

I may dissuade a pope from his best wish

Of seizing all Ferrara as his own.

Lucrezia. O, that, do it at once. Harm as you wish

A pope if you can like a duchess' love.

Francesco. (kissing her

I like it better, woman of my own,

Than fighting mightily beside my friends.

Lucrezia. Ah, who can doubt Lucrezia's loved at last?

Francesco. You also lug a brother to your heart.

Lucrezia. Then save him, too, and you might hope to say:

"Lucrezia's bed's my pleasure on this day."

Francesco. He has escaped, some say, to fight with Spain.

Lucrezia. How fallen from the man he was! He fights

For kings when he should conquer for himself.

Francesco. Come, kiss in bed, and we will speak of him

When I return with him. Now, now, now, now,

No more tomorrows to my pressing needs.

Lucrezia. There all I have to help my own I'll try.

Exeunt Lucrezia and Gonzaga

Act 5. Scene 9. Before the castle
of Viana. 1507

Enter King Juan of Navarre and Cesare Borgia, attended

Cesare. I'll fight against this Louis de Beaumont.

I will unwind this ball of wool.

Juan. My captain-general! Who dares avouch

I may not win today? Behold his walls.

He will not quit Viana's mighty fort

Against express commandments from his king.

Cesare. I'll pull him screeching out. Should he complain,

Or offer treasures to spare a lost life,

His white flesh will be shrewdly rubified.

Juan. When they defy Cesare, rebels seem

To feed on henbane: lovely to the sight

In flowers of deep yellow, yet with leaves

That sicken smell, on which all memories

Die, never, as suspected with men's souls,

To rise a second time.

Cesare. I'll make a Spanish traitor loathe his life.

Juan. As I would wish.

Cesare. Then on to Rome, where I will make a pope

Disgorge his treacheries against his own.

In the dead wood of crucifixes hide

Tarentulas, which spin no web but creep

In burrows underground, till they arise

To hunt relentlessly towards their prey

Of mice and birds with deadly boring fangs.

Exit King Juan, attended and enter enemy soldiers; Cesare's attendants flee

Cesare. Ha, is it so? Then I am for you all.

What, backing off? I'll streak you shamefully

For failing courage when renown
is yours
If you can win it.

(Cesare kills a young soldier

In times of war, as brave men sally
forth,
Loved maidens wring their hands.
His may let go.
Who hesitantly comes with a
snail's pace?
A frightened fool would rather
whore and eat
Than war and gain: his name's
inscribed on tombs,
Of whom we can tell nothing but
he died.

(Cesare kills a frightened soldier

Your mother's hands will wash a
corpse tonight.
Who stalks with martial strides? A
withered mouse?
We recognize twelve months in
every year,
But an old man has fewer day by
day.

(Cesare kills an old soldier

Who would die next? How, daring
with a squint?
A man needs but one eye to find
his grave.

(Cesare kills a one-eyed soldier

Some talk of kings and priests,
some curse and rail
Against ill-placed authority in
state;

The worst of all are unknown
shallow fools.

Not one to down Cesare all alone?
The times decline when youth's
best calculate

Like aged old. Whenever doubtful
on

Legitimacy of your boldest act,
Consult the young: they only can
possess

The ear of generations yet to
come.

Ah, woe and wonder of our
sightless age!

I fight for kings, when I should
fight for me.

Surrounded all about with slaves
green girls

Might beat back to their tents.
The difference

Between what passes now for men
and me!

They huddle, whispering on the
sure way

To choke a man with numbers. If I
shrink

From tussling with their very little
worth,

I'm theirs. Let me not live. Now,
do; advance

With half a man's soul forward to
my foot

Immovable, if any care to fall,

A hurried breathless corpse to all
the world.

(Cesare is stabbed by many

I share the spite of struck wasps
on a wall,
Crawling towards death with dart
upreared.

(Cesare dies

Soldiers. Rat on the ground! A
Borgia cut away!
A Borgia in his grave, and all is
well!

Exeunt soldiers and re-enter King
Juan, attended

Juan. Ha, did they- O! What a
black thing lies here!
Time-honored battles in Spain are
no more.

Enter Francesco Gonzaga

Francesco. Too late! Lucrezia
never to be mine!

Juan. You see by his example how
the world

Goes: cherished vellum blotted
and annulled

By envy's careless spite.

Francesco. What is the best in me
and those I love

Should I condemn in others?

He bettered best of ancient
soldiership.

How poor a mind man shows
when he can be

Astonished by his artful cruelties!

The prototype of man killed, when
he should

Have lorded over scraggy Italy

And all the world besides!

He was what should be still.

Juan. A mightier duke lay never
thus unmoaned.

Come, soldiers, Mars' spirit lay to
rest.

Exeunt King Juan, Francesco, and
attendants bearing Cesare